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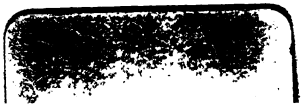

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"The Erastians constituted another branch of the Assembly (i.e. the Assembly of Divines), whose principal tenet consisted in disclaiming all coercive power over the members of their communion; considering that punishment, & forms of ecclesiastical government, ought to be invested in civil rulers. The representatives of this party were not numerous in the Assembly; their most learned representative was Dr. Lightfoot." — Life of Dr. Lightfoot prefixed to Pitman's edition of Lightfoot's Works, vol. 1, p. IX..

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C. Francis -

1845.

See Edmund Scherer, Esquisse d'une Theorie de l'Eglise Chretienne, p. 299 &c.

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ERASTUS

ON

CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

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THE

THESES OF ERASTUS

TOUCHING

EXCOMMUNICATION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN, WITH A PREFACE,

BY

THE REV. ROBERT LEE, D.D.,

OLD GREYFRIARS, EDINBURGH.

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PREFACE.

"*Omnium revera nocentessimus error est quod plerique de Magistratu Christiano haud aliter sentiunt quam de dominatu profano; cujus potestas tantum in profanis sit agnoscenda.*"—W. MUSCULI, Loci Commun.

"*Alibi autem longiore disputatione ostendi, pertinere emendationem Ecclesiarum ad Magistratus officium præsertim cessantibus Episcopis, aut adversantibus Evangelio. Quod enim aliqui dicunt: Magistratum prophanum non esse judicem controversiarum de dogmatibus, vera et explicata responsio est: Ecclesiam esse judicem, et sequi normam Evangelii in judicando. Cum autem Magistratus pius vere sit membrum Ecclesiæ, judicet et ipse cum aliis piis et eruditis juxta normam, quam dixi. Omnibus Ecclesiæ membris dictum est: Cavete à Pseudoprophetis. Item: Si quis aliud Evangelium docebit, anathema sit. Quare ut cæteri pii, ita Magistratus considerent dogmata, et si quis falsas et impias opiniones serit aut defendit, hunc judicent esse anathema, aut compescant. Valde errant Principes si hanc curam non pertinere ad se arbitrantur.*"—PHILIP MELANTHON, De Magistrat. Civil., p. 628. Edit. 1569.

THE epithet "Erastian" has acquired so unhappy a celebrity in this country, from the conspicuous part it has been made to play in our late ecclesiastical controversies, that one

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may well wonder, that none of those who have addicted themselves to the use of it have undertaken to explain its meaning. Was it that the term unexplained, served its purpose fully as well as it would have done, if those who heard it had known what the abomination was at which they were taught to shudder? For all superstitions, and the superstition of hatred as much as any, are found to thrive best in the soil of ignorance. Can it have been felt, that an honest declaration what *Erastian* means, would destroy the powerful indignation which the word, shrouded in mystery, was found to inspire? It cannot, at least, be doubted, that multitudes in Scotland at this moment, regard "Erastian" as a term expressing, in a compendious way, whatever is most heretical and apostate in the Christian Church; and Erastus himself, as some heresiarch so abandoned, that men may not permit themselves to say more respecting him than merely to utter his name. And, in their notion, it settles the whole question regarding any opinion, any man, or any Church, if to that man, that opinion, or

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Church, the word Erastian can with any show of plausibility be applied. We cannot permit ourselves to entertain a supposition so discreditable to the parties concerned as that would be; and therefore, we willingly adopt the other, and more charitable hypothesis, that those ministers who have been in use to call the Established Church Erastian, and who have forsaken it for that very reason, were themselves as ignorant of the true meaning of the word as were the people whom they have taught to misuse it. Surely if any of the seceding ministers had known what Erastianism truly was, he would not have permitted either himself or his brethren to style a Church Erastian which neither now holds, nor has ever held, any of the distinctive principles of Erastus, and which cannot be shewn ever to have acted on any of them.

However this may be, I have thought it might be not a useless labour to translate the treatise in which Erastus unfolds his idea of church government, that both friends and foes may judge for themselves with what truth

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the charge of Erastianism is advanced against the Church of Scotland.

The Theses, of which a translation is now published, contain the whole Erastian theory; so that the reader is here in possession of the opinions of Erastus as they were set forth by himself. It is true, that another work on the same subject (*Confirmatio Thesium*) was also published by him. But the latter is merely a defence of the doctrines maintained in the present work, and not a new exposition of other matters not embraced in that now in the reader's hands. It is needful also to keep this in view in interpreting many statements in the latter treatise, as from neglecting this circumstance, some appear to have much misunderstood and misrepresented the doctrines of Erastus.

Before sketching shortly the Erastian theory, as developed in the following treatise, it may be not improper to present to the reader a short account of the author himself, to remove the fancy, which may perhaps possess him, that he is about to peruse the work of a teacher of heresy or infidelity, or even of Atheism, to which a

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certain charitable individual in his own days — *ornatissimus vir Petrus Dathenus in Palatenatu Concionator Aulicus* — had the modesty to insinuate, that the opinions of the Heidelberg physician led, and who was rebuked by one of the greatest of the Reformers for his ridiculous apprehensions and his narrow bigotry.* For this purpose we shall reprint "the life of that learned philosopher, physician, and divine, Thomas Erastus," which is prefixed to the translation of the Theses published A.D. 1659, and which, except the last three paragraphs, is taken, as the writer informs us, from the lives of illustrious Germans, by Melchior Adam. It may be proper to advertize the reader, that this M. Adam, who speaks with so much respect of Erastus, was no partizan of his, but a Calvinist, and a writer who, as the Lutherans complain, shewed no excessive anxiety to exalt the merits of men not attached to his own party.

* *Vide* Epist. Hen. Bullinger. Petro Datheno, &c., ad calc. Oper. Erasti, p. 355. Edit. 1589.

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THE LIFE

OF

THAT PIOUS AND LEARNED PHILOSOPHER, PHYSICIAN, AND DIVINE,

THOMAS ERASTUS.

As it is one of the most proper attributes of that great enemy of mankind, to be an accuser of the brethren: so it hath ever been one of the greatest stratagems that hath been used by his chief instruments against the Lord's holy ones. For when their dazzled eyes durst no more strive against the glorious beams of the truth, which were ready to consume them, then their only recourse was to darken the honourers and admirers thereof, by casting a cloud of black calumnies upon their fame and reputation, which some smattering (as they call themselves) divines have been very liberal of towards our author. Yet could not any of his enemies, in

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his own time, find any colour or cause for the same: but he was always so admired by all men of all parties, that I thought it most fit not to present his friends' character, but men's different from him in opinion. Thomas Erastus was born in Baden, in Switzerland, the year of our Lord (as Pantaleon believeth) 1524. After he was taught the first principles of learning in his own country, he went to Basil, A.D. 1540, where he most industriously learned both the tongues and liberal sciences. There, in the year 1542, he was infected with the plague, but, by God's special grace, and the physician's care, he recovered of the malady. He so courted the sweeter muses, that, nevertheless, he did not forget to acquaint himself intimately with divinity; and his continual converse with the holy Scriptures, and his serious meditation in religious matters, taught him, by God's good mercy, what was to be followed in the controversies raised then about religion.

And although this young man that was so much enamoured of learning, was, by a double impediment, kept back from the attainment of

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his wishes, both by the disease of his body, and the meanness of his fortune, yet, notwithstanding, he would not suffer himself, by either of these discommodities, to be called away from the sweet society of the muses. For although he had a defect in his right hand, and had not the use thereof in writing, yet he inured his left hand so much thereunto, that in public he received his master's dictates with a more current hand than any of his fellows; and in private, if anything was to be committed to writing, it was all happily done by him. Besides, being born of parents whose mean fortune enrolled him amongst them that (*haud facile emergunt*) not easily swatter out to any great height, the Lord provided him with a noble patron, whose bountiful and liberal hand sustained him till he accomplished his studies. He went for Italy, and came to Bononia, where he gave himself fully to the study of the subtilest philosophy, in which he so far advanced, that he was not esteemed among the ordinary sort of that profession. From the walks of the philosophers, he betook himself to the gardens of the physi-

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cians, where he was of such industry, that he was most acceptable to the ablest Medici, and was judged worthy to be honoured with a public testimony of his skill in that piece of learning.

Amongst other masters, he had D. Lucas Ghynnst, a good, learned, and experienced man, whom he doth very much praise in divers of his writings. It was he that wonderfully commended to him a receipt made up of thenack and mithredate. Camillus Franchin was his fellow in his studies at Bononia, who afterwards became a famous physician of that city, and ever remained his most constant friend.

After he had spent nine years in the company of the most famous and expert physicians of Italy, he returned to his friends in his own country, and lived for a while in the court of the Prince of Henneberge; and forthwith his happiness and skill in the practice of medicine was spread in favourable reports.

Frederick, the third Prince Elector Palatine, did upon honourable terms call him thence, and committed to him the public profession of physic

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in his ancient university, then flourishing in Heidelberg, and made him the chief physician and counsellor, by reason of his prudence and uprightness of life. Whilst he remained there, the controversy about the figure in the words of the Lord's Supper again broke fresh out. Erastus did assist the trope, yea, by published writings, and so was not only a physician to the body, but soul also, and afforded most worthy help to the raising and restoring of that Church. In the year sixty-four, Erastus the physician was appointed by Frederick, Prince Palatine, to be united with his divines at that conference which was appointed betwixt the Palatinate and Wittenberg Theologues, concerning Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, in the monastery of Mouldrun.

After this he went from Heidelberg to Basil, and, in the last part of his life, did honour that academy with teaching and disputing, of which, in the first and greenest years of his study, he had been a member. He did wonderfully extol school disputes, in respect they did exercise both invention and judgment, and confirm the

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same. And further, he constantly professed, that he never returned from any of those disputes, but always bettered. At length, in the year 1583, in the last of December, he paid his debt unto nature, and was buried at St Martin's Church, at Basil, with this monumental inscription:—

LUMINUM DOCTORI.
NON HERMES HIC TRIS-MEGISTUS:
SED
ACUTUS PHILOSOPHUS,
ELEGANS MEDICUS,
SYNCERUS THEOLOGUS,
HEIDELBÆRGENSIS,
ACADEMIÆ COLUMEN,
BASILIENSIS LUMEN;
CUI NUTRITIA SUA LIBERALITER
REPENDIT;
DOCTIS PIISQUE AMABILIS,
ET QUOD
AD PATRIÆ SPLENDOREM
FACIAT,
HELVITIUS BODENSIS,
THOMAS ERASTUS CONDITUR
SEXAGENARIUS
AN. SAL. CIↃ IↃ XXCIII.
PRID. KAL. JAN.

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He was of an unblameable life, and was not ashamed even publicly to acknowledge any known error, if the matter so required. And was so desirous of learning, that he would willingly have died, so that he could but have cleared those doubts, of which he could not satisfy himself. And, although he thought he did not err, and that he had confirmed his own opinion very probably, yet, nevertheless, he was ever ready to give place to them that offered better.

He was most diligent in making inquest into the virtues of medicaments; and most gravely resolved, that those physicians must be deceived that trust without trial. Whence he was happy enough in his practice, and by the help of God's grace, cured many that were heavily diseased of dropsies, epilepsies, gouts, and other maladies accounted incurable. Neither had he any man's authority in such esteem, that it could move him to depart from what was evident to sense, or agreeable to reason: but he always judged, that truth was to be taken from the matter itself, and not from authority. He refuted judicial

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astrology in divers writings yet extant; and refuted Paracelsisme in a treatise and other disputations: yet doth not condemn, but commend lawful chemistry. He hath also written concerning witches, and their power, &c.; against *Mercenarius de putredine; Comes Montanus;* a volume of epistles and disputations; of *Aurum Potabile;* of the occult power of medicaments; dissertations concerning comets. And in theology, he hath published a treatise on the Lord's Supper, without his name; against Schegkius, of the one person and two natures of Christ; of excommunication, both theses and defences, published, as is supposed, by his widow. The names of the books which he hath written, and are not yet published, are set down by John Gregory Schenckius in his *Bibliotheca Medica.* And thus much is testified of his life by Melchior Adam, a strict Protestant, according to Calvin's tenets, in his book, *De vitis Germanorum Medicorum.*

And a Roman Catholic of no small note, the illustrious James Augustus Thuanus, President of the Parliament of Paris, doth afford him this

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true and handsome testimony in the seventy-eighth Book of his Histories, in the year CIↃ. IↃ. LXXXIII.

"This year [saith he] was shut up with the death of Thomas Erastus, born at Baden, in Switzerland, who constantly walking in the solid truth, and not so much in the principles delivered by ancients of both the sciences, was famous in this age for his knowledge of philosophy and physic. Therefore, with valid arguments he refuted astrology, which, from the position of the stars, judgeth of men's fortunes, and likewise with sound reasons did refute and sharply prosecute the Paracelsian Medicine which, either by its novelty or vanity, had enticed so many wits in Germany and elsewhere. At last, having walked out of the human sciences, he likewise handled divinity, and did thoroughly treat of the question concerning discipline and church censures, against the opinion of them of his own party, from whence arose heavy contentions in the Helvetian churches. Finally, being above threescore years, in this year, in Basil, where he had

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professed, as he had done long before, at Heidelberg, he that had illustrated nature by so many learned monuments, did pay his debt to nature on the last of December, and was buried in St. Martins." Thus far he.

Wherefore, seeing so famous men, both of his own and other professions, have publicly acknowledged his piety and learning, I think they must be cursedly distracted of their wits, or of a very evil nature, that will rather believe the pedantic Machiavilian calumny of his enemies, (who only in this went beyond him,) than the honourable reports of such illustrious and grave personages.

The reader who is familiar with the uses to which the name "Erastian" has been commonly put in Scotland of late years, will no doubt feel surprised to find that Erastus was not an atheist, nor even an infidel—that he was neither an open enemy of the Gospel, nor the most flagitious of mortals—but a man

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whom good and great men pronounced great and good.

The works of Erastus regarding church government are included in a single volume, which comprehends the two works already mentioned—the Theses, and the Confirmatio Thesium—and also several highly interesting letters written by Henry Bullinger and Rodolph Gualter, regarding the subjects discussed in the Theses. This work was commenced, as we learn from the preface, "Pio Lectori," A.D. 1568; and the Defence of the Theses was written before the close of the following year. The occasion of composing these works is explained in the Epistle to the Reader, and was not that which is suggested by Mr. James Fergusson of Kilwinning, who insinuates that "Erastus, the prime author of the doctrine, *upon some discontent*, did first vent it"—a slander probably borrowed from some of the numerous calumniators of the learned physician.* The Theses were handed about at first

* See Fergusson's "Refutation of the Errors of Toleration, Independency, Erastianism, and Separation," 1692. Like a large

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in MS., and excited great attention and much controversy. It was not till the year 1589, six years after the death of its author, that the book was published. The indignation which the opinions maintained in it had occasioned, seems to have rendered the publication dangerous, as both the printer's name and the place are suppressed on the title-

party in the Church of Scotland, then and since, Fergusson was excessively zealous against the error of Erastianism, but his zeal against toleration was hotter still; for he says, "Toleration is of all errors the most dangerous and damnable, in so far as other errors do only evert [overturn] these [those] particular truths of Scripture to which they are contrary; but by this one error, (this monster of toleration,) way is made to evert all the truths contained in Scripture," &c.—Toleration Refuted, p. 48.

This was the common opinion, and, I believe, the prevailing doctrine of the Church of Scotland, in Fergusson's day, and long after. It was preached from pulpits as the Word of God; and those good men thought they could prove it from thence by inferences and analogies. Is not this a solemn warning to us, not to advance our doubtful opinions as the Word of God, and force the Scriptures to say what they never meant? Fergusson and his brethren denounced as heartily those who defended toleration, as any do now them who deny non-intrusion and spiritual independence. Yet now we all acknowledge, that, with all their zeal and confidence on that point, they were wrong regarding it. May not others, equally confident respecting *their* notions, and equally addicted to judge and censure, yea, excommunicate, them who deny these, be found to have been equally erroneous?

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page of the original edition, and fictitious names substituted. The work was reprinted at Amsterdam, A.D. 1649; and an English translation of the Theses appeared in London the year before the Restoration. This version is so literal, as often to be hardly intelligible, and is, moreover, very inaccurately printed. For these blemishes the translator apologizes in the quaint Epistle to the reader, which will be found below.* I am not aware whether the translation, here referred to, of the "Confirmatio Thesium," was ever published. I have not thought it

* "To THE READER. — Be pleased to be informed, that the defences of these Theses, against Mr. Beza and others, are likewise translated, and, if thou desire, shall be printed. In both which, if thou find not all answered that can be said against them, or hath been said, by Mr. Beza, Mr. Catherwood, in his *Altare Damascenum*, Mr. Gilespy, in his Aaron's Rod Blossoming, or by the divines of London, in their *Jus Divinum*,—never believe me to have reason; if thou wilt be at the pains to confer their reasons and answers with what is by our author answered and urged. The Life is somewhat scholastic and laconic; nevertheless, to know the force of his reasons, is well worth the time that shall so be employed. I choosed rather to be a pedant in adhering to the author's words and construction, than to be too busy in another's labour. Pardon the errors of the press in this edition, for both my amanuensis and the corrector are Presbyterians. The next edition shall make an amendment of these faults, which now we desire thee to amend, &c."

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necessary to translate the latter treatise, it being much more minute and controversial, and, on the whole, a much less finished and interesting production than the Theses, and chiefly because my object is not to defend the opinions of the author, but to explain them.

The question which Erastus sets himself to discuss in this treatise, is the following:—Whether excommunication be a divine ordinance or a human invention? Rejecting the extension of the word which Romish writers had adopted, to correspond with the practice of their Church, he understands by excommunication, exclusion, not from the public worship of God in general, much less a deprivation of the privileges of civil life, but simply exclusion from the participation of the sacraments because of sin committed, and for the purpose of producing repentance. His argument regards persons who have been baptised, who are sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, who are orthodox in their sentiments, and who are desirous of partaking of the sacraments. For, according to the doctrine of Erastus, an igno-

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rant person, a heretic, or an apostate from the faith, should be excluded, while they severally retain these characters. But an individual who is none of these cannot, he maintains, be lawfully debarred from those means of grace, on the ground of immorality or unholiness of conduct. In other words, Erastus denies that the members of the Church can, according to the institution of Christ, be punished for their sins by being excluded from God's ordinances. How, then, are the sins of Christians to be punished? "By the civil magistrate," he replies, "whose special duty and office this is."

In cases, however, where Christians live under a government other than Christian, he recognises the propriety and advantage of courts of arbitration, such as are pointed at by St. Paul, 1 Cor. vi., and which were designed to prevent the faithful scandalizing their religion, by pursuing each other before heathen tribunals. But where the government is Christian, he insists that authority to punish offences resides only with the magistrate, and that no other party has right to arrogate that office to

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himself, or is to be submitted to if he does. He quotes with approbation, Musculus, who condemns the erroneousness and absurdity of their opinion, who then spoke and reasoned, (as many now also speak and reason,) regarding the Christian magistrate, virtually in the same way as they would regarding the magistrate if he were heathen—not remembering, that it is only *as Christian* that the State can lawfully be recognised by the Church as her copartner and ally, and that any connection with the State on other grounds, or under any other idea, than as being Christian, would be spiritual adultery on the part of the Church. "*Omnium verè nocentissimus error est quod plerique de magistratu Christiano haud aliter sentiunt, quam de dominatu profano: cujus potestas tantum in profanis sit agnoscenda.*" This, as expressing compendiously his own sentiments, Erastus quotes from the commonplaces of Wolfgang Musculus, one of the most zealous and laborious of the Reformers, and, in some respects, perhaps the most enlightened of them; and on whom the propounding of such doctrines does not

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seem to have brought down any reproach, much less those charges of heresy with which such opinions would now be visited.

In support of his opinion, which is virtually this, that the business of the clergy is to *teach* the nation, and that of the magistrate to *govern* it, Erastus alleges the practice instituted by God under the law, according to which, though the commission of a sin often might *require* an individual to offer sacrifice, it never, in any case, as he holds, constituted a reason or ground of excluding him from offering sacrifice, or joining in any act of the common and public worship of the people of God. In regard to the Passover, particulary, which held, under the Old Covenant, the same place which the Lord's Supper occupies under the New, Erastus alleges the express requirement of God, that every male that was circumcised should keep it, under pain of death: as, also, the equally positive command, that all the males of the Jewish people should appear three times in the year before the Lord, at the three great national festivals—there being no exception stated, which

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would imply, that only those of them who lived godly and sober lives were to be admitted to join in the sacrifices, while those whose conduct was ungodly and immoral were to be excluded, but the contrary.

The procedure of our Lord's forerunner, John, in administering the rite of baptism to all persons, good and bad indiscriminately, is held by Erastus to be conformable to, and illustrative of, the principles of the Jewish law on the subject.

To the objection, derived from the legal uncleanness, and on which great stress seems to have been laid by those who opposed his theory, Erastus makes an elaborate reply, whether satisfactory or not, the reader will judge for himself. And his conclusion is this, that legal uncleanness, under the Old Covenant, was not intended to typify sinful conduct under the New; so that, as the unclean were excluded of old from the tabernacle or temple, so should the immoral be debarred from the sacraments now; but that as the tabernacle represented not the Church on earth but the Church in heaven, and as the

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uncleanness which excluded from it was not an *action* but a *state*, so the law demanding that exclusion was designed to intimate, that into the heavenly temple no one whose moral nature had not been purified by the blood and spirit of Jesus should be allowed to enter.

He next endeavours to meet the argument which had been urged against his views, and which was founded on the prohibition of leaven during the celebration of the Passover; and which argument was conceived to derive much force from the reference made by St. Paul to the leaven, in 1 Cor. v. The reply is as follows: The Lord's Supper is never, in the New Testament, styled the Passover. Christ sacrificed for us, not the Lord's Supper, is said to be our Passover.

An answer having been given, or attempted to be given, to what had been urged from the practice of the Jews returned from captivity, as recorded in the Book of Ezra, Erastus proceeds next to consider that *expulsion from the synagogues*, of which frequent mention is made in the New Testament. His argument is this —

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that what was done in the synagogues can form no rule as to what should be done in the Christian Church, because the practice of the synagogues was, in other words, the conduct of the Pharisees, unsupported by any divine warrant or authority. And, in point of fact, we find from the New Testament, that persons were cast out of the synagogue who were not, and were never attempted to be, excluded from the temple, or prevented joining in the sacrifices and other acts of the public worship instituted by God.

From these considerations, the conclusion is deduced, that as the sacraments of the Jewish Church were, though not formally, yet intrinsically, the same as those which Christ instituted, having reference to the same doctrines, and being intended to promote the same ends, therefore those principles which regulated admission to them in the Jewish Church must continue still, unless some alteration can be shewn to have been intimated in the New Testament.*

* Sacramenta veterum et nostra, quod ad res significatas attinet, eadem sunt, ut in 1 Cor. x. Paulus clare ostendit. Quare nisi legem Moses hac in parte vel abolitam vel mutatam constet, contrarium inducere nulli homini licebit.—T. xxiv.

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From the Old Testament, the learned physician passes to the New, regarding which he affirms, that we do not find that any such thing as excommunication was either taught or practised by our Lord and his Apostles; but that the admission of Judas to the first Eucharist, and the permission still to join in it of those Corinthian Christians who had so shamefully abused the ordinance, must be held to establish an opposite principle. He finally argues, that, as the sacraments are not of superior dignity or importance to the Word, there is the same reason to exclude the unworthy from the latter as from the former.

There follows next an elaborate reply to the arguments urged against his theory from the passages, Matt. xviii. 15–20; 1 Cor. v.; and 1 Tim. i. 20. The first of these—"*Tell it to the church*," &c.—is interpreted to mean, "Tell it to the magistrate of thy own people, or religion, before bringing thy co-religionists into a heathen court." And *the delivering to Satan* spoken of in the two latter passages, was, he contends, some miraculous infliction, and not excommuni-

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cation. The words of St. Paul, (1 Tim. v. 17,) which had been alleged on the other side, are interpreted in the way usual among those who deny the divine institution of lay-elders.* As to the prohibition of *casting pearls before swine*, &c., Matt. vii. 6, Erastus holds that the *thing* intended is not doctrine, nor any Christian ordinance, and the *persons* not professing Christians, but open contemners of the Gospel. Excommunication had been defended from the expression, 1 Tim. v. 20. Erastus is zealous for "rebuking sinners before all;" but because they should be rebuked, he thinks it does not follow that they should be excommunicated. Those expressions in the Epistles which forbid the believers *to eat with them that walk disorderly*, are interpreted as referring to private intercourse alone; and regarding the *pollution* which was thought to be brought on the ordinance by the participation of sinners, he holds that the wicked then only pollute us when we imitate their example, otherwise all the holy men of whom we read in the Bible, and our

* See Bilson, "Perpetual Government," &c., and Bishop Hall.

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Lord Jesus Christ himself, must have been polluted.

It may be proper here to observe how far, in several particulars, many orthodox expositors have agreed with Erastus in different points of this theory. Besides what is said to this purpose by himself,* it may be added, that Chrysostom and Jerome, as well as Augustin, concur in holding, that the sins intended in Matt. xviii. 15–20, are private and personal injuries.† And Calvin‡ maintains, with Erastus, (against the Arminian§ and Independent theologians,) that "the Church" to which such matters must be told is not the multitude of the believers, but the elders, rulers, or Sanhedrim of the Church. Calvin agrees further with Erastus in supposing that "the Church," of which our Lord speaks in the 18th chapter of Matthew, is the Church which then was.

* Thesis LVI.

† Chrysost. Homil., 61, in Matt.; Augustin, de Verbis Domin. Serm. 16; Hieron. Sup. Matt. cap. xviii.

‡ Harmonia Evangel. in loco.

§ Steph. Curcellaei Opera Theolog. et Phil. à Limborch Theolog. Christ.

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What is much more strange, and almost amusing, is the fact, that Mr. James Fergusson of Kilwinning, whose "Refutation of Erastianism" was mentioned before, and who seems, like many others since, to have refuted Erastus without well knowing what he held, actually urges, in his "Refutation of the Error of Separation," some of the very views and arguments which will be found in the Theses now in the reader's hands: so that we might suppose this worthy man, so zealous against Erastianism, had actually borrowed* his weapons against the sectaries from that very person whose name and supposed tenets he so abhorred,—unless it were evident, from his "Refutation of Erastianism," that he knew nothing of the works of the Heidelberg Doctor; because, had he done so, we cannot suppose he would have laboured to refute as Erastian, opinions which, by whomsoever maintained, Erastus denies.†

This, then, is properly Erastianism; to wit,

* See "Separation Refuted."

† Fergusson, for example, holds against the Erastians "that the Civil Magistrate, as a Magistrate, hath no power either to preach

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that excommunication is not a divine ordinance, but a device of men; in other words, that the sins of professing Christian people should be punished by the Christian magistrate with civil penalties, not by pastors and elders denying them access to the sacraments. In the whole treatise there is not one word of those questions which have distracted the Church of Scotland of late years; nor is it easy to say which of the two parties, who opposed each other in that Church, had less sympathy with the peculiar opinions of the learned and acute

or administer the sacraments." Instead of saying that he has, Erastus says emphatically that the Civil Magistrate has *not* any such power. "Nam in Novo Testamento nihil de ratione regendi Christus docuit; neque aliquid mutare Judæos, vel alios, jussit. Non hoc dico, Deum voluisse Magistratum sacrificare atque alia hujusmodi, quæ sacerdotibus imperata solis fuerant, facere."—*Confirmat. Thes.*, lib. iii. c. 1. It may be said in reply, that some one, styled an Erastian, had affirmed what Fergusson refutes. But what should we think of the candour or fairness of a person who should denounce and refute, *as a Calvinistic doctrine*, some opinion which Calvin himself also had refuted and denounced? Probably Fergusson was misled by a quotation in Gillespie's Aaron's Rod, ii. 3, where Erastus is speaking not of what the Magistrate *ought* to do, but of what, in case of necessity, (re ita postulante,) he *may* do. We dont hold that laymen *ought* to preach, because we admit that cases may occur in which they *may* preach.

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Heidelberg Doctor. It is true, one of these parties charged the other habitually with Erastianism, which charge was, as habitually denied, neither stopping to ask what Erastianism truly was; but each having an idea of its own regarding the thing, and both agreeing in holding that, whatever it might be, Erastianism was at least some very foul and dangerous heresy.

The Erastian theory, as here sketched, (and of the justness of which sketch the reader may, from a perusal of the following treatise, judge for himself,) is thus seen to regard properly the question of the terms on which professing Christians should be admitted to the participation of the sacraments. It is not a theory concerning the relation in which the civil authority stands to the ecclesiastical, so much as regarding that in which the people of any church stand to the clergy primarily, and secondarily to the civil power. It has very remote reference, if, indeed, it has any reference at all, to the great discussions which have been carried on of late in this country, as to whether it be lawful for the civil power to interfere at

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all, or, if at all, to what extent, in the proceedings of ecclesiastical courts regarding ordination and induction of ministers. Such a point, at least, I do not find mooted, or very obscurely, in the works of Erastus. Certainly it is no part of his main theory. So that Erastianism is a controversy, not between those who hold lower, and those who maintain higher notions of ecclesiastical power in relation to the State or civil authority, but rather between those who entertain different views regarding the terms of admission to the sacraments.

On this matter there are, I think, three distinguishable opinions, or hypotheses. The first is that of the Independents, or Congregationalists, who hold what is termed *pure communion*. Assuming two principles, as evident from the Scriptures; first, that the sacraments are designed only for those who are truly the children of God; and, secondly, that the Church has the capacity of recognizing the marks by which these are distinguished from others; they draw the inevitable conclusion, that the Church, so endowed, is both warranted

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and required to refuse admission to all who want the requisite spiritual character; or to remove from its communion those whose conduct, after admission, has proved them unworthy of the privilege.

The second theory, and which stands directly opposed to this—is that of Erastus. He denies both of the premises from which the conclusion of the Independents is drawn, and, of course, the conclusion itself. Maintaining that the sacraments are strictly *means of grace*, as much as the Word and prayer, he holds that Church rulers are no more warranted to exclude persons, desirous of partaking of the sacraments, from joining in them, than they would be, did they attempt to prevent any one from hearing the Word, or joining in the public prayers of the church, on the ground that they judged him unconverted or unholy. In short, while the Congregational hypothesis regards participation in the sacraments as a profession that the persons participating *are saints*, Erastus considers it as a profession simply that the communicants *are desirous of being saints*. And,

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accordingly, while the fact of a person's actual spiritual condition is a feasible subject of judgment by other men; his desires and his wishes evidently lie beyond the province of any judgment but that of the Searcher of Hearts.

While particular ministers in the Church of Scotland may have inclined towards either of these opposing theories—as many seem to have inclined to that maintained by the Independents—the Church herself seems to have adopted, and to maintain a view of the subject distinct from either. For while, on one hand, she has always opposed the Erastian doctrine, that exclusion from the sacraments on account of immorality is not an ordinance of Christ—affirming that not only the grossly ignorant, but also the openly profane and scandalous, should be debarred, she has never (it is believed) professed the other, or Independent doctrine, that, before any person can lawfully be admitted to the communion, the Church should have obtained what she considers sufficient evidence that he is truly and spiritually a child of God. She takes upon her, (according to the theory

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maintained in England by the Presbyterian party against the Independent, or Dissenting Brethren, as they were called, in the days of Baxter and Owen,) not to determine who are, and who are not, true Christians; but a much lower office, *namely*, to exclude those, whose open conduct makes it manifest that they cannot be, according to the most charitable judgment, the children of God. Indeed no Church, assuming the character of National, could easily pretend to act on such a theory as that professed by the Independents. For while it is conceivable that the body of the people, being well-instructed and well governed, might be brought to a general profession of Christianity, and to an outward conduct not openly inconsistent with its requirements; no sober person would easily permit himself to expect that the bulk of any population would, in the present circumstances of the world, attain the condition and character of the living members of Christ's body. We have no reason, either from the past history of the Church, or the declarations of holy Scripture, to expect any such consum-

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mation, till the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and great voices in heaven shall say—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Messiah, and we shall reign for ever and ever." And, therefore, the idea of a National Church is naturally and consistently repudiated by them who profess those terms of communion which are insisted on by Congregationalists.

But though the Church of Scotland has not, and as assuming from the first the position of a National Church, could not, reasonably lay down such terms of admission to the sacraments, as those which Independents profess to consider indispensable, she never has admitted, nor does she now admit the Erastian theory—that none but a heretic, a man denying some fundamental doctrine of the faith, an apostate, or a heathen, can lawfully be excluded from the sacraments. This principle she has always denied, both in theory and practice, and she denies it now in theory, and probably in practice also, as much as she ever did at any former period. Probably there is, at this moment, not

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one minister or elder in the Church of Scotland who agrees with Erastus in that which constitutes the real peculiarity, or *heresy* if you will, which has rendered Erastus famous. And thus we stand in the curious predicament of being condemned and deserted, in other words, *excommunicated*, by a large number of our former brethren, for the supposed crime of Erastianism, while neither has the Church in her public capacity done any act which countenanced Erastianism in any degree, nor can any individual minister or elder in the Church be mentioned, who does not dissent from Erastus in that point which is his real peculiarity, and constitutes *Erastianism* properly understood.

Without meaning anything offensive, it may yet perhaps be permitted us to question, whether (Erastianism being rightly understood) the persons who now glorify themselves under the name of "The Free Church of Scotland," are not, at this moment, more Erastian than is the Church which they have left. That they are not less so, no honest man

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will, I think, attempt to deny. For however open, or *lax*, if you will, admission to the sacraments at any time may have been in the Established Church—that is, however *Erastian* may have been the practice there—none will pretend that the terms of admission in the Protesting Church are *less* open, or lax. The ministers, elders, and members who seceded, were *en masse* included in the New Communion. The very fact of secession, indeed, may have been regarded as of itself a sufficient evidence of grace; but, on reconsideration, this mark will perhaps appear not perfectly decisive; and certainly it is *not* included among those tests which are prescribed in the Word of God, Gal. v. 22-26.

Neither the ministers of the Established, nor of the Protesting Church, can be admitted as proper witnesses regarding such a matter as that alluded to above. Others, unconnected with either Church, must decide. The Scotch Independents, who, from their peculiar principles, are very sensitively alive to the matter, seem to be of opinion that, however lax the

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Established Church may be in its practice of admission to the sacraments, the Protesting Church is more so. Without meaning to give implicit credit to all the statements, contained in certain letters from Independents in Scotland, regarding the condition of the New Communion, which have lately appeared in English Dissenting periodicals, and certainly not sympathizing at all with the spirit in which some of these letters are written, we yet conceive that no person, who calmly and honestly considers the statements contained in those communications, can much doubt, that if there is any difference between the two Churches at all in the matter in question, the Protesting Church is the more lax of the two; that is, the more Erastian of the two — approximates in its proceedings more closely to the theory of Erastus, than does the Church which it has excommunicated because of the supposed sin of Erastianism. Erastianism, I repeat, and as the readers of the following treatise will at once acknowledge, is properly a certain opinion or doctrine respecting the terms of admission to

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the sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper, and they who have constantly reproached the Church of Scotland as *an Erastian Establishment*, have uniformly so charged it falsely: and to whatever extent that charge may be well-founded as regards the Establishment, it is at least equally applicable, and probably more applicable to the party itself which makes that charge.

It will be answered to this, that the Church of Scotland is now denounced as Erastian, not as holding the opinions of Erastus regarding excommunication, but regarding the power of the civil magistrate in the Church. But what are the opinions of Erastus on this latter point? Is every doctrine on the subject that is judged monstrous, or can be rendered odious, to be called Erastian? It may be convenient for orators to have always at hand, as the working-tools of their art, certain comprehensive phrases of denunciation, yet there are bounds beyond which this license should not be allowed to proceed. And I know not what peculiar hatefulness there is in the word Erastian—"for sound it, it doth

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become the mouth as well" as other words — which can have made it the scape-goat to bear the iniquity of all the monstrous and heretical opinions regarding the civil power in spiritual matters, which either came into men's own heads, or which they chose to impute to their neighbours. Was the word impressed into the service because it happened to be a *nomen malè ominatum*—a word which chanced to be in bad odour? or were the phrases "Erastian Church," "Erastian Establishment," "Erastian Corporation," so much in request because they were sonorous, and therefore served well to garnish empty or uncharitable sentences?

It may, perhaps, surprise the reader to be informed that, in the writings of Erastus regarding church government, occupying a quarto volume of near 360 pages, all that can, by any interpretation, be referred to the general question, is included in a very few pages, even in which no mention is made at all of that matter of ordination of ministers, concerning which our controversies have chiefly been; and that it is

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not absolutely certain whether, even in that one passage, he is arguing the question of church power further than as it relates to the matter of excommunication, which is the subject of both his treatises. This at least is certain, that some of his expressions, which, taken by themselves, might bear the most general meaning, are by himself restricted, in the context, to the particular question to which his argument had reference.*

As, however, the particular case may appear to involve the general principle; as many expressions in the writings in question *seem* to affirm, in the most unlimited way, the dogma commonly imputed to Erastus; as, finally, both

* Videri enim mihi minime necessarium, ut duo ponantur capita in uno Ecclesiæ Visibilis corpore, quorum imperia, decreta, gubernationes diversæ, ut unius rectio alterius curationi non sit subjecta, &c. Equidem senatum Ecclesiasticum sive Presbyterium sic volebant ordinari, ut summum jus haberet *vitia puniendi*, in ipsis magistratibus, &c.—*Prefat.*, p. 3. Also, "At in hoc (Rep. Judaic.) ita fuerunt constitutæ res Deo, ut duo *diversa de moribus judicia*, Politicum et Ecclesiasticum nusquam reperiantur," p. 3. To the same purpose might be alleged the quotation from Peter Martyr, Confirm. Thes., lib. iii. c. 1. "Monstrosam fore eam Remp. quæ magistratum habet Christianum, si duo sint pari potestate *de coercendis Moribus* judicia."

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his disciples and his opponents have understood his principles regarding excommunication to comprehend all other exercises of ecclesiastical power whatever,—it may be not amiss to inquire, very shortly, Whether the Church of Scotland, which, as we have seen, cannot without absurdity be identified with Erastianism, as this is a denial of the doctrine of excommunication, can be held committed to it, as a general principle or theory?

It may be premised, that the Physician of Heidelberg nowhere insinuates that the authority of the civil magistrate may come in competition with the Word of God; much less that he may dispense with this Word, or set himself above it: "For," (these are his words,) "as in managing secular affairs, the magistrate may not transgress the bounds of equity, justice, and honour, laid down in the laws of the State; so, much less, in disposing of and arranging religious matters and those which relate to the worship of God, is it permitted him to depart, in any particular, from what God has prescribed in his Word. This Word he should

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follow as his rule in all things, without departing from it at any time in the smallest particular."*

From this, it is manifest that Erastus, instead of denying the Headship of Christ, *maintains* this doctrine expressly. For, surely, *he* holds the Headship of Christ, who teaches that Christ is Supreme Head, to whom all other authority is, of right, subject. And he only denies that doctrine, who holds that there is some other authority which should be submitted to in preference to that of the Lord Jesus. Erastus nowhere puts the authority of the civil magistrate in competition with that of our blessed Lord, but everywhere he insists that all men, as well magistrates as ministers and people, should be subject unto Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. So that, if it should be proved, (which it never can,) that we are Erastians, it would be proved, that, as such, we hold, instead

* Veruntamen ut in rebus profanis curandis ei non licet terminos acquitatis. . . . sic in dispenondis et ordinandis rebus sacris, vel ad cultum Divinum pertinentibus longe minus ei licet ulla in parte a præscripto Verbi Dei discedere, &c.—Confirm. Lib. III. c. i.

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of denying, the Headship of Christ. Certainly no man ever recognised that doctrine more distinctly than Erastus did. He may, indeed, have misinterpreted the command of Christ; but surely it is one thing to misinterpret a command, and another to question or deny the authority from which it proceeds. They who have represented Erastianism as virtually identical with the tenet of Hobbes, that the civil power may establish whatever religion it pleases, and exact obedience thereto, which also the subject is bound to render for conscience sake, (and which tenet is truly a denial of the Headship of Christ, and an assertion of that of the magistrate,) should have known better, for they might have learned the contrary, if they would, from those authors who are the opponents of Erastus, and with whose writings they seem to be most familiar, and whose opinions, they believe, they most truly represent.*

It is equally a calumny to represent it as an

* Gillespie, Aaron's Rod, B. II. c. iii.; who, unlike many of his less learned and able assailants, treats Erastus with considerable fairness and respect.

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Erastian doctrine, that the civil magistrate may set up any form of church government he pleases, and may change it as often as he pleases—"may," as a writer against Erastianism expresses it, "establish Episcopacy this year, the next year Presbytery, and the next year he may cast both, and establish Independency; and, if he likes, he may find out a government different from any of these, and establish it."* For, whoever may have favoured such a notion, the very fundamental position in the argument of Erastus is directly opposed to it—namely, that, in the law of Moses, were set forth the pattern and form of a commonwealth, in Church and State; and that this ought to be maintained under the Gospel in all respects, except where an alteration has been particularly intimated in the New Testament.†

* Fergusson, "Erastianism Refuted," p. 89.

† "Cum enim Deo nullus sit sapientior, omnium sapientissimam oportet esse Rupublicæ formam, quam ipse instituit. Quinetiam oportet umamquamvis tanto esse melius, aptius, sapientius constitutam quanto ad formam Reip, a Deo ordinatæ accedit propius; et contra, necessum est, quamlibet tanto esse deteriorem et periculosiorem, quanto ab illa recessit longius. Confirm., Lib. III. c. i. See also Theses XXV. XXXI. XXXII.

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The peculiarity or error in the doctrine of Erastus (his language being understood as it has generally been) is this, that the magistrate holds the same relation to religion, and the ministers of it, as he holds to secular affairs, and those who manage them: so that, as these are the province of the magistrate in whose name they are done, and who does not perform them himself, only for this reason, that it is more convenient to perform them by proxy, so the government of the Church is part of the government of the State, and is conducted in the name of the magistrate; and, though God has appointed that he may not perform the functions of the ministry himself, (except, perhaps, in cases of absolute necessity,) yet he must see that it be done, and that it be rightly done. And whatever authority may be exercised by ministers, in any way, there cannot be two magistracies in the State at once distinct and supreme, nor two supreme legislatures. This seems the general theory which Erastus produces in defence of his particular doctrine, but regarding which very little is said in his works.

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The passage in which he most fully states it, is given below.*

Supposing these statements not to be confined in their reference to the particular subject of which the Author was treating, but to have that general application to the question of church government, which is their most obvious meaning and is the interpretation which has been commonly put on them, they amount to

* Recta hominum gubernatio omnis vel est visibilis, vel invisibilis. Hanc internam vocamus, cœlestem, divinam, et spiritualem: illam externam, humanam, et corporalem nuncupamus. Porrò sicut duplex duntaxat est rectio, sic est necesse, ut duo tantùm sint Rectores supremi. Et internæ gubernator est Deus: externæ Moderator est magistratus unicus. Absurdum namque est unius rectionis duos esse sic distinctos rectores, ut alter non sit alterius pars, sive ut unius nomine non omnia administrentur. Quanquam verò visibilis et mundunæ procurationis multæ sint partes, si res, quas dispensat, spectemus, multiplex tamen ipsa non est. Et enim sicut unica est mensura, qua res diversissimas, ut pannos lineos, laneos, sericeos, argenteos, aureos, mensuramus: et unum est pondus, quo res omninò discrepantes ponderamus: sic una est dispensatio rerum omnium visibilis, tametsi per eam res prorsus dispares, et dissimiles curentur et temperentur. Legum vocamus alias oppidanas, alias rusticanas, alias scholasticas: nec est tamen necessarium, ut tot sint Legislatores: sed unus idémque civibus, rusticis, scholarum rectoribus, leges præscribat. Eodem modo non est alius magistratus, qui res profanas curat, ab eo qui res scholasticas vel sacras disponit. Res quidem inter se differunt, at non differt similiter harum dispensatio et moderatio.

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this, that both the civil and the spiritual interests of the subject are committed to the government in every Christian country, whose duty it is to watch over both, and to advance both, though not capriciously, either as regards means or ends; but that in the one department it is bound by the rules of justice and mercy, in the other, by the dictates of God's Word: and that religious affairs are a part of the one administration, (*eadem dispensatio*) of government, however differing in their own nature from civil affairs.* For which reason, the two functions of civil government, and the ministry of the Word and sacrament, are not to be discharged by the same individual; but this on the ground, not of any difference of administration, but only of difference in the things administered, and for the

* "Sed universam gubernationem Reipublicae visibilem, sive circa res civiles et profanas, sive circa res sacras cultumque divinum versaretur, uni solique Magistratui politico tradidisse; constabit hoc quoque, eandem dispensationem Magistratui Christiano, aliis autem nullis deberi." Confirm. Lib. III. c. i. "Aliud est, facere aliquid, et aliud regere seu facienda ordinare ac disponere. Non enim Magistratus, cum vivendi rationem subditis suis præscribit, et quid ab omnibus ordinibus fieri velit, præcipit, per se omnia facit. Unus nihilominus omnia agit, ad diversa officia et causas dissimiles, diversos et dissimiles adhibens administros."—Eod. loco.

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same general reason, that different departments of knowledge and of business are found necessary to be discharged by different individuals, so giving rise to distinct professions and trades.*

This theory, however startling it may appear to us, does not seem to have excited any great alarm among the reformers generally. Indeed, it may be doubted, whether, with the exception of the Genevan divines, they did not all of them maintain something very much resembling it. Bossuet's reproach against them, that they made the civil magistrate their Pope, is not without a shadow of truth—though in the most vital point it is false—for, by denying him infallibility, and by requiring his submission to the Word of God, they took from the magistrate that which was the most dangerous, as well as the most impious of the Papal pretensions. Reading Philip Melancthon's "Loci Recogniti," we find, except in the point of excommunication, very little difference between his doctrine

* "Is enim, ut ait Arist. in Polit. curare debet, ut omnes officium faciant, ut Jurisconsulti, ut Medici, ut rustici, ut Pharmacopolæ: inter quos etiam possumus numerare Ministros et concionatores."—Confirm. Thes. Lib. III. c. i.

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regarding the magistrate's province in religion, and that of Erastus. The Zurich divines, Vuolphius, Lavater, Haller, and especially Gualter and Simler, and the venerable father of the Swiss Reformation himself, Zuingle, read and approved the Theses of Erastus. "*Placent illa nobis;*" so says Henry Bullinger, himself one of the most eminent of the reformers, and regarding whom there occur in the Zurich Letters so many expressions of esteem and veneration. Bullinger was the friend and correspondent of Erastus, whose benevolence, piety, and simplicity of character, he loved; whose eminent learning and abilities he admired; and whose opinions he himself held and professed; and he rebuked, with the authority to which his age and reputation, and his eminent services in the cause of the Reformation entitled him, the virulence of those little venemous creatures, who in his own age ventured to malign the illustrious physician, as one whose opinions undermined the foundations of religion. Nay, from a letter of his, we find that Bullinger addressed Beza himself—who finally wrote

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against Erastus, and in reply to whom the *Confirmatio Thesium* was composed—exhorting him by no means to suffer himself to become exasperated against his friend Erastus, or to publish anything against him, as the lovers of contention hoped he would. Beza intimates in reply, that though he disapproved of the doctrine taught in the Theses, he had no intention of publishing anything in opposition, and wonders who could have propagated such a report. Beza adds, that he had written to Erastus that he would send him a private and friendly answer to his arguments; for though he differed with him, he did so as from a man whose remarkable gifts he highly estimated. *Sic enim ab eo dissentio ut valde probem in eo eximia Dei Dona.** Bullinger tells us further—as, indeed, we may learn from his works—that Musculus, also, certainly one of the greatest men of the Reformation,—*egregium Christi organum, et celebris Ecclesiae Dei Doctor*, as Bullinger calls him not unjustly,—agreed substantially with Erastus; and, in short, that such had been, for half a cen-

* Epist. H. Bulling., p. 355.

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tury, the common opinion of Zuingle, of himself, and of the Helvetic churches and doctors, both alive and dead:* so that, even if we were convicted of Erastianism, we should only be proved to hold an opinion with many of the most enlightened, and most eminent for learning and piety, of the continental Reformers, not to mention many of the greatest English divines, at the Reformation, and after it. If, therefore, they who constantly assert we are Erastians, could prove what they assert,—as they never, to the end of time, will be able to do,—still we might reply, that, if we err in that point, we err in excellent company—with multitudes of men, compared with whom, whether in respect of talents, piety, devotion to the cause of Christ, or in learning and powers of reasoning, neither they nor we are worthy to be compared, or even named.

It might, perhaps, be not difficult to explain, how so many of the Reformers coincided substantially with Erastus, and why those of them who differed from him in opinion, were not

* Bulling. Petro Datheno, 1 Junii, 1570.

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thrown into those paroxysms of indignation and horror which the very mention of Erastianism excites now in so many bosoms. It will perhaps be found, on inquiry, that the idea of the union of Church and State, which prevailed in the 16th century, is very different from that which now commonly possesses the minds of those who advocate a connection of Church and State. The theory common among them, and which was derived not from abstract reasonings, as ours seems to be, but from the Jewish theocracy, contemplated the Church and State as one subject, or *suppositum*, considered under two different aspects or relations — being the Church in relation to religion — the State in relation to temporal and secular affairs: the same men being the State as they were men; the Church as they were Christian men. This theory recognized the magistrate in a double capacity — as a man and a Christian man — as Melancthon distinctly intimates, and as is exhibited in the relation in which the Monarch of England stands to the Church of that country. From this doctrine, their high notions regarding

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the power of the magistrate respecting the Church, and their doctrine of persecution for what the law held to be heretical opinions, naturally flowed. For they considered that the nation had not only a corporate will, but a corporate conscience; and as an individual is subject to both the tables of God's law, so should the nation be; and therefore the magistrate, as the organ of the national conscience, was to exact of all members of the nation, compliance with the first, no less than with the second table. Among those who thought thus, a doctrine which recognized the sole right of the clergy to preach the Word and dispense the sacraments, which yielded them full power to execute the three great functions in which Paul sums up their duties, "*reprove, rebuke, exhort*," —which granted them authority to reprehend offenders publicly, and when Christians lived under a heathen government, to hold courts of arbitration for determining disputes and quarrels, and even to exercise a distinct church government in general;* such a doctrine was

* Confirm. Thes., Lib. iii. c. 1.

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not likely to create much alarm on account of its abstract derivation of authority to the clergy through the civil magistrate.

Perhaps, too, many of them considered the abstract theory as involving questions rather of curiosity than of practical importance. For they may have reasoned, as many now do, that all acts which may become subjects of dispute between civil and ecclesiastical authorities, may be divided into these three great classes: those which in themselves are right; those which in themselves are wrong; and those which are indifferent, neither right nor wrong in themselves, but acquire a moral character, as right or wrong, from certain circumstances or accidents attending them.

The obligation of the action thus depending, not on the medium through which it passes, whether this be the civil magistrate or the ecclesiastical, but on the authority of Christ himself, it might be plausibly concluded that, provided any command could be evinced to come from Christ, the particular medium through which it was conveyed was a very subordinate consi-

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deration. And, though secular matters be the proper province of the civil ruler, and ecclesiastical of the clergy, yet, even in ecclesiastical affairs, the civil magistrate, commanding what was right, deserved and should receive obedience, in preference to the ecclesiastical requiring what was wrong.

If, for instance, the civil government required a minister to preach one doctrine, and the ecclesiastical a different, the ecclesiastical would appear to have the preferable claim to obedience, this being a matter pertaining more to Church government than to State government. But if, on examination, he were satisfied that that doctrine which the State required, and the Church forbade him to preach, was the Word of God, then it would be right to comply with the command of the State, and disobey that of the Church, not because the secular power was the proper organ for conveying such a command to him, but because the command, however conveyed, was that of the supreme authority, Jesus Christ himself. This argument might be answered by those who contend for the special

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guidance of the Holy Ghost, granted to synods and councils, whereby infallibility is secured to them — a dogma which has found very great favour in the Christian Church, from an early period down to our own days, especially among them who composed such assemblages, and most of all among those who had the chief direction in them.

It is, therefore, only regarding matters indifferent, that the conflict of civil and ecclesiastical authority can ever seriously perplex an enlightened and conscientious man. In other cases the rightness or wrongness of the things themselves will determine his conduct.

But whatever may be the merits or demerits of Erastianism, what causes soever may have predisposed any to its adoption; to charge the Church of Scotland with holding or acting on that theory, either in its special or more general aspect, is an injustice so gross, that we cannot believe it could be perpetrated except through ignorance. To any person who knows what Erastus held and taught, the imputation must appear absolutely ludicrous. For not only has the

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Church of Scotland not issued any public document, or performed any public act, embodying the peculiar theory of Erastus, or of those afterwards styled Erastians, but, it is not known that there is an individual minister or elder in that Church, by whom any such notions are entertained. Because, on the confines of the civil and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, there is some point which my neighbour thinks belongs to the civil jurisdiction, while I am of opinion that it pertains rather to the ecclesiastical, shall I, on this ground, accuse him of denying there is any such thing as an ecclesiastical jurisdiction? Shall I denounce him as an Erastian, while he repudiates every characteristic peculiarity of Erastianism as much as I do? Such a proceeding may serve the purpose of raising a prejudice in the mind of an ignorant multitude, but it is not dictated by Christian charity, nor even consistent with common fairness.

Surely the ministers of the Church of Scotland should be allowed the common privilege of all other men — to know themselves what opinions they hold, and what they do not. We

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are quite willing that the testimony of others should be taken regarding our actions; but we suppose we ask no more than justice, when we humbly demand that our sentiments should be learned from ourselves.

If Erastianism be now either the faith or practice of the Church of Scotland, is it too much to expect, that they who say it is should furnish the proof? Which of her ministers avows it? In what public document has she embodied it? Which of her acts has she justified on the principles of Erastus? Can that (I say not in *candour*, but in *common sense*) be held to be the doctrine of the Church which all her members repudiate? To pretend we are Erastians because some few acts, and these, too, done in a time of great excitement and keen controversy, and in the midst of difficulty and perplexity,—may, by the ingenuity of hostile criticism, be construed into a practical acknowledgment of something like the doctrine held by Erastus, or by some one else, whom some other person, knowing little of the matter, called an Erastian, is a method of reasoning in which

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logic has as little share as charity. God forbid *we* should ever imitate the bad example of applying to any Christian community such a style of reasoning as this.

It is probably time we were done with reproaches and railings. No party has gained by them. All have lost something, and the most a great deal. If we are no Church, but a worthless *corporation* or *institute*, which should be swept from the land—if we are "the dregs" and "the chaff," as we are called—our works will soon make the fact manifest—by our fruits men will know us. If, on the contrary, we are sincerely seeking to serve our Divine Master according to the light we have, He will both acknowledge us, and will give us more light.

In the meantime, all that are children of God have mutual bonds, which even their estrangements and separations cannot break. Whether they will acknowledge each other in that character or not, all believers in Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, are members of one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and members one of another. Let us fear lest we

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sin against Christ by sinning against those whom He may recognise as his members, though we will not. Pride and hatred are then most deadly, when they wrap themselves in the cloak of godly zeal. This let us all remember, and ask ourselves, whether our disunion and separations, in the punishment of which we are all involved, have proceeded from the strength or from the weakness of our love to God and to our brethren. The following words I quote, not for the purpose of conveying a censure against any, but as a warning, too much required by us all, and which each of us will do well to ponder: "*Videant confidentes ac supericiliosi homines, scientiae opinione inflati, quam discissi coporis rationem capiti sint redituri.*"—*Grotii Opera.* T. IV. p. 140."*

As connected with the subject of excommunication, the celebrated speech of Whitelocke in the Long Parliament has been printed at the end of the volume.

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* "Let self-confident and contemptuous men, blown up with a conceit of their own wisdom, consider what account they will render to the Head of the Church for the dismemberment of the body."

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PREFACE

TO

THE THESES.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THAT MOST GRAVE QUESTION, WHETHER EXCOMMUNICATION, OR THE DEBARRING FROM THE SACRAMENTS OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, BECAUSE OF THEIR SINS, BE A DIVINE ORDINANCE, OR A HUMAN INVENTION?

BY THE

RENOWNED THOMAS ERASTUS,
DOCTOR OF MEDICINE

M.D.CLIX.

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To the Reader that is Pious, and desirous of Truth,

Thomas Erastus, Physician, wisheth all health and happiness.*

Lest any that shall fall on these my writings should wonder what causes induced, yea, fully moved me to enter this dispute concerning Excommunication; I will briefly and truly relate the original and occasion of the commencement thereof. It is about sixteen years ago, since some men were seized on by a certain Excommunicatory fever, which they did adorn with the title of Ecclesiastical Discipline, and did contend, that it was holy and commanded of God to the Church; and which they earnestly did desire should be imposed on the whole Church. They affirmed the manner thereof to be this: that some certain Presbyters should sit in the name of the whole Church, and should judge who were worthy or unworthy to come unto the Lord's Supper.

* This Address to the Reader is reprinted with corrections from the old translation, 1659.

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I wondered that then they consulted about these matters, when neither we had men to be excommunicates, nor fit excommunicators: for scarcely the thirtieth part of the people did understand or approve the Reformed religion; all the rest were our violent enemies: so that any man that was indued with the least understanding could not but foresee, that there would follow on this necessarily a dangerous schism of the multitude. Therefore, at that time it seemed to me not good to inquire, how any might be thrown out of the society of the Church; but, on the contrary, I rather judged that we should use means to induce most to the knowledge of the truth, and to infold them into the Church. And they that were to be overseers herein, did neither in age and experience, nor in wit and judgment, no, nor in carriage and authority, so far excel the rest, that they should be esteemed able to discharge these matters worthily. Wherefore, when I did see this business, which they so violently desired, could not go forward without the loss and overturning of the Church, I oft requested them that they should ponder the matter accurately, and that they should not rashly begin any thing which afterwards they should repent; but in vain. For although at that time my opinion was that excommunication was commanded in the holy Scriptures; yet, notwithstanding, I found not the manner thereof, which they proposed to us, to be com-

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manded there. Wherefore, seeing it seemed that Christ had left the manner thereof free to our own choice, I also did seriously consider of the way and manner which would most fit our condition, and draw least trouble with it. In which I used so much more diligence, as I had observed it to be more destructive to Christianity, not only in former times, but now also.

Whilst I was in these thoughts, and did inquire what the ancients had written concerning these matters, and that I found all things weaker in them then I had persuaded myself, I was compelled a little to doubt of the whole business: presently after that, I consulted the Schoolmen, but found nothing better amongst them. From them I betook myself to the modern writers. But even amongst these men I found nothing more exact or solid: yea, I perceived that in some things they manifestly disagreed among themselves; which made me a great deal more attentive. Therefore, leaving the interpreters, I returned to the holy Scriptures; and in my reading I diligently noted, according to my understanding, what was consonent or dissonant to the received opinion. In which the consideration of the Jewish Republic and Church did not a little help me. For I thought thus with myself: The Lord himself doth testify, Deut. iv., that his people hath statutes and laws so just and wise, that the institutes of no people, that the sanctions of no re-

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public, that no ordinances, however wisely constitute, were able to compare with them. Therefore it is necessary that that Church is most worthily and wisely ordered which cometh nearest to the constitution of the Jewish Church. But in this, matters were so ordered by God, that we find not anywhere two diverse judicatories concerning manners, the one politic, and the other ecclesiastic. What then hindreth, that the Church now also, on whom the most merciful God hath bestowed a Christian Magistrate, should be less content with one government.

After this I did confer about my thoughts with good, holy, and learned men, and I did exhort them that they should not lightly ponder the cause. For it seemed to me most unnecesary to put two heads upon one body of a visible Church, whose commands, decrees, and government were already diverse, so that the rule of the one was not subject to the care of the other, but the government of each in its own kind was supreme. Indeed they would have had their Ecclesiastical Senate or Presbytery so constitute, that it should have the supreme power of punishing of vices, yea, in the Magistrates themselves: notwithstanding, not with corporal punishments, but with the debarring them from the sacrament, first privately, and if this did not succeed well, then next solemnly and publicly. But I said, I did believe that one Magistrate, appointed by

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God, could as well now bridle all transgressors, as he could of old. I did propose for example to myself the most famous kingdom of Solomon, which was, as it were, a type of Christ's Church reigning on this earth. And that we did not find either under Moses, or under the Judges, or Kings, or under the government of these that were called to be Rulers, such two discrepant judicators. Nature denies (saith Musculus) two authentic governments in the same people, whereof one is not to be subject to the other. I was not a little helped by those with whom I conferred: partly because they observed some things better then I could, partly because they gave me occasion to think of certain other things more exactly.

In the mean time I kept myself quiet: neither did I reason with any man, except he challenged me, in this matter; and, being challenged, I ever answered most modestly: because it seemed neither profitable nor necessary to disturb our Churches with this dispute, whilst no man was known to thrust this form of government on them openly. Indeed, they who thought it far more sweet and pleasant to command than to obey, rested not so; but by all arts they could (as I afterwards knew) laboured to persuade our most holy Prince, that he should endeavour to bring some such thing into our churches. And if some other things had not withstood it, perchance they had persuaded him. By what scandalous speeches they did everywhere traduce me, (who

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they knew did not consent to them, and were not ignorant that I laboured that they might not accomplish their design,) it is needless here to relate.

It fell out afterwards, that an Englishman, who was said to have left his country by reason of certain vestures in the church, desired to be graduate doctor, and did propose a dispute concerning indifferent things, and vestures. This dispute our theologues would not admit, lest they should offend the English, (albeit in his last Theses there was something concerning this matter,) but, as it seemed, they esteemed it nothing to disturb our peace; wherefore amongst other Theses he proposed this, that it behoved in each right constitute church this order should be kept, that the ministers, with their presbytery chosen for that purpose, should have power to excommunicate any sinners, yea, princes themselves. Although I feared that this dispute was not appointed in vain, yet I hoped that it would be nothing else but an ordinary discussion, not such an one as are appointed for the deciding of controversies, but such as are instituted for the exercising of the youth, and for judging of their gifts, that desire public honours. Therefore, neither would I move any thing, neither could I by reason of my occasions be present at it. And I did exhort others, which I did see would dispute against it, that they would have a greater care of the good of the Church than of some few men's

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imprudency. Nevertheless, one and another disputed, whom, if they had not afterwards called, together with me, profane, Satanic, diabolic, turbulent, fanatic persons, enemies to piety, &c., the dispute had been nothing but ordinary.

Indeed, as for my part, I can truly affirm, that I never purposed to write anything concerning this matter of controversy, before I did see and hear them carry themselves so immodestly, both in private and public: and because I was then a great deal more then usually employed, (by reason of the soldiers, which then, Anno 1568, returned with Duke Casimire, &c., out of France, laden with diverse diseases,) I did note down my thoughts by pieces, as they did (amongst so great businesses) occur to me at any time. Which, albeit I had thrown them together confusedly, and had placed them in no certain order, for the foresaid cause; partly, whilst they were writing over, and partly as soon as they were written, I gave them to be examined and judged of to some, unto whose judgment I attributed much, and of whom I thought myself to be very well-beloved, and that not without cause; though I believed it falsely. And I desired them, if they found anything that was not truly affirmed or solidly proved, that they should freely refute it with better reasons. I did hope, that, if I gained nothing else, yet I would obtain this—that they, seeing our arguments, would become more

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calm, and would think that we did not without reason dissent from them. One of the two chief, with whom I resolved principally to confer, did read three parts of four before all were written fair over. Of which, being demanded his opinion, he promised he would give it after he had read over all. Nevertheless he, by the bye, proposed something concerning the leaven, and did think that the consent of the ancient Church was much to be esteemed. To conclude, he produced other such like stuff, by which it was most easy for me to know his mind and opinion. I understood, almost at the same time, that this self-same man had written a treatise of excommunication, in which he did approve of the common opinion, which, once known, there needed no doubt to be made what his answer would be. For I knew that he would not depart from that he had once affirmed without it were for fear of danger. Therefore, seeing these things which he did oppose were refuted in the last part of my writing, I offered it all to be judged by the other, whom I esteemed to be as dear a friend to me as was living. He did not only receive the book from me loathingly, (I know not whether he was admonished before,) but did openly declare he would not read it; and, albeit I did urge it, he declared he was compelled to it against his will. Nevertheless I left the book some days with him, and did entreat him by all means and prayers I

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could, that he would read it over, and give me his judgment thereon. Which, when I knew by certain reasons that I had entreated this of him in vain, I took my book back from him after twelve days, or thereabouts, that I might beg the judgment of others. But because that writing was of a greater length, then, that it could be read in a short time by more persons, I did contract it into a few Theses, whereby it might be more easily communicated to many. And in this point my resolution fell not out unhappily: for both I did know the opinion of many most worthy and famous theologues throughout Germany, which was the thing I chiefly desired; and they were so dispersed amongst the students, that they who at my entreaty would not read them, were now compelled to peruse them against their will.

But that it might appear unto all, that I sought no other thing but the naked truth, I prefixed a preface, in which I demanded these two things — 1*st*, That all men would diligently examine each, and that they would weigh them in the balance of the holy Scriptures, and, if they should see me in an error, that they should free me therefrom, that thereby I might likewise free others. I promised with my very heart, (I call God, the Searcher of all hearts, to witness,) that I would, before God and men, give him thanks that would shew me my error. But because I foresaw that

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would come to pass which afterwards happened, I desired, in the second place, That if they had resolved to reprehend anything therein, they would do it in those ways and places, wherein it should be lawful for me both to interpret my own words, and to defend justly what unjustly they should condemn. And although they had ever found me their most constant friend, and most ready to serve them in all good offices, notwithstanding I could scarcely keep them, by reason of what had passed before, that they would so deal with me as I dealt with them. Neither was I deceived in my opinion; for of my greatest friends, as I foolishly believed, they became suddenly my enemies, insomuch that they would not any more deign to speak with me, although in my whole life I had never hurt them in word or deed, but had ever laboured to deserve well at their hands, which I yet resolve to do. In the meantime I gave God thanks that it so happened, that I should make proof of their faith and goodwill, rather in such a matter than in any other.

In the meantime they were not quiet; for, after they did see that they had tried in vain, by the magistrate, to wring the Theses out of the hands of the students, they wrought another way; to wit, under the show of laws which are nowhere extant. They desired that, as the theologues did assay nothing in the professions and rights of others, so they desired that other professors might be enjoined to

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abstain from their schools. If this had been desired sixty years ago, it had seemed tolerable—how at this time it can be carried, let others judge? Was it only said to them that teach theology for a yearly salary of some hundred florins, *Search the Scriptures: prove the spirits, whether they be of God: prove all things: hold that which is good?* I thought the doctrine of theology had been common to all Christians, and that, therefore, it was everywhere taught publicly. What other thing do they seek, when they desire we should abstain so from their school, as they essay nothing in the rights and doctrines of other faculties?

I believe they would not this, that we should not hear their lectures, or that we should not enter that place to learn. Chiefly seeing they desired that, by reason of my Theses proposed most modestly. Who, I pray, hath interdicted them the studies of the tongues, of medicine, philosophy, or of the laws? Is it because they care not for these studies, that we should also neglect the study of theology? If men got not more loss from ignorance of holy Scripture, than from unskilfulness in those matters, perchance we should gratify them. They will easily vanquish, if it be not conceded to any to contradict their statutes. Of old those of the Church of Rome required these things of us, and they desired it with some more right thereto. But I cannot gratify either,

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whilst my Saviour, Jesus Christ, commandeth me otherwise.

In the interim, it doth not move me that they say, it becometh not me to handle theology, and that, in so doing, I do not rightly provide for my own esteem; it may be, because I inquire after the truth without wages. For if I were hired by a stipend to teach theology, I should do nothing in this point, according to their opinion, different from my office and duty. But I desire nothing else than to understand the truth, to glorify God, and that I should be rather made ashamed, than that the truth should be trodden on. Christ, in that place, spoke not in vain, That they cannot believe, who desire glory of one another, neglecting the glory of God.

Wherefore, when even this had not fallen out according to their opinion, and that they could not contain their conceived hatred, they began to oppugn us with arguments, which, at every opportunity, they did propose not without cruel criminations. Which albeit they were told me by diverse men; notwithstanding, for peace's sake, I easily contemned them; and I hoped it would come to pass that, when that violence of their mind should begin to languish, and their wrath was a little cooled, they would be rendered more favourable to us. Notwithstanding, here I was also deceived; for, after the first month almost, they

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neither have remitted anything of their wrath, neither have they forborne to impugn our writings, partly by reproaches, partly by calumnies, partly I know not by what sophistical little reasons; wherefore I brought again the hundred Theses to the forge, and reduced them to seventy-five, and placed them in their proper order; which at first I had placed, not where they should have been, but where they did occur. I explained some things in them more clearly, and proved some things more solidly. To conclude, I laboured that I might fully satisfy the lovers of the truth, as far as could be done in so short a writing.

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THESES

ON

EXCOMMUNICATION.

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THESIS I.

THE term excommunication appears to be derived from the 10th chapter of 1st Corinthians, and to denote a separation from that communion which is there styled *the body of Christ.* Certainly, excommunication is now defined by almost all to be an exclusion from the society and communion of the faithful.

II.

There is, however, a twofold society of believers; namely, that which is internal, or spiritual, and that which is outward, visible, and political. As for that third sort, feigned by certain late Romish authors, it is both a clumsy invention, and does not concern our present purpose.

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III.

Between those two sorts of society there is, however, this great difference, that a person who is included in either of them, is not therefore necessarily comprehended in the other. For, as he may be a member of Christ who is unjustly cast out of any visible church, or is compelled to conceal himself or dwell among heathens, so, they who are enrolled in the visible congregation, are not all of them living members of Christ. From whence it follows, that those two things may widely differ, which join us to the one church, not to the other, and separate us from one, without separating us from the other.

IV.

And indeed we are made members of Christ; that is, we are united to the internal and spiritual society of Christ and believers by faith

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alone, which worketh by love; and from that society we are cut off only by unbelief: so that no one can engraft us into this church but he who can give us living faith, or exclude us from it, but he who can again take that faith away.

V.

But of the external or visible church we are constituted members, by professing the same faith, approving the same doctrine, and, finally, by using the same sacraments. And the person regarding whom these three things hold, is — so long, at least, as they hold regarding him — reckoned a member of the external congregation of believers, even though he never attain to the inward mind and spirit of such.

VI.

He, therefore, that is cast out of the external communion of the Church, (that is, who is

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excommunicated,) is cut off either from all those three privileges, or from two of them, or only from one. But no person ought to be debarred from the two former,—that is, from professing the faith, and approving the doctrine of Christ (under which last expression I include hearing the Gospel); but rather all men should be invited to it, and by every means induced to do so. It remains, therefore, that of the three things mentioned above, an excommunicated person is deprived only of one, namely, participation of the sacraments. Whether he is necessarily denied private intercourse with Christians or not, we shall consider afterwards. But it is certain, that any other penalties than that now indicated, do not belong to the essence of excommunication; for both may those penalties be inflicted on persons not excommunicated, and they may be not inflicted on persons who are excommunicated.

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VII.

Wherefore, besides this, which they style *The Lesser Excommunication*, and which they rightly define as an exclusion from the sacraments alone, the Papists have superadded another, which they have called *The Greater*, and The Anathema; and, contrary to the plain sense of Scripture, they have made this to consist in exclusion from churches, from private intercourse, and from every lawful act. Whereas the Apostle (1 Cor. xiv. 24) distinctly shews, that neither heathens, nor any class of persons whatever, were prohibited from hearing of the Word of God—from the reading of it, or from joining in the thanksgivings and prayers of the Christians.

VIII.

It is clear, from what we have said, that excommunication is nothing else but a public

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and solemn exclusion from the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, (which St Paul terms peculiarly a *Communion*, as was before remarked,) after an investigation by the elders; the object of such exclusion being, that the sinning parties may repent, and again be admitted to a participation of the sacraments.

IX.

But here the question meets us, Whether any person ought, because of his having committed a sin, or of his living an impure life, to be prohibited from the use and participation of the sacraments with his fellow-Christians, provided he wishes to partake with them? The question here regards a person who professes the same faith with us, has been united to the Church by baptism, and does not dissent from her doctrine, (as was before stated, Thesis V.,) but is culpable solely in regard to his life and conversation. This, then, is the question, Whether any command or any example can be

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produced from the Holy Scriptures, requiring or intimating that such persons should be excluded from the sacraments?

X.

Our answer is, that none such can be found: but rather that many, as well examples as precepts, of an opposite tendency, occur everywhere in the Bible. Thus, in the Books of Moses, (Exod. xii. 15, 19; xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23; Numb. ix. 13; Deut. xvi. 16,) we find it written, that three times each year ought every male, that was circumcised, to appear before the Lord; to wit, on the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles. And even strangers, provided they were circumcised, the law commanded to celebrate the Passover, as well as the Jews. Yea, even unclean persons, and those on a journey, are required to eat the Passover on the same day of the second month, and in the same manner as the Jews. It is also added, that the punishment

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of death was to be inflicted on any person who should neglect to celebrate the Passover; that is, any person who was neither on a journey nor unclean. Wherefore God wished and commanded all circumcised persons to celebrate the Passover; neither did he exclude, either from this sacrament, or from the other rites, ceremonies, or sacrifices, any one, the unclean excepted.

XI.

In the Book of Leviticus, different sacrifices are appointed for different kinds of sins, (whether committed through ignorance or mistake, or with will and intention,) so that they who were guilty of such sins had appropriate sacrifices by which they might expiate them. In like manner God (Deut. xiv. 23) commands *all*, not excepting the wicked, to eat their tythes at Jerusalem before the Lord: and the reason is added, that so they might learn to fear the Lord Jehovah all their days. Therefore the sacraments were

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incitements to piety; and for that reason, nobody was kept back from them, but all were the more invited to partake of them.

XII.

In fact, we do not read that, among the Jews, any person was ever, because of his wickedness, hindered by the Priests, Levites, Prophets, Scribes, or Pharisees, from coming to the sacrifices, ceremonies, and sacraments. The Chief Priests and Pharisees held Christ and his Apostles to be very bad men; but we do not find that they ever attempted, either during his life or after his death, to repel any of them from the sacrifices and sacraments instituted by God. No: nor did they keep away from the temple and the ceremonies any Jew, even though he were a publican; or any circumcised person, however immoral his life. For they were well aware that the law gave them no authority so to do. They found fault with Christ, indeed, because he ate and drank

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with publicans (Matt. ix. 11): but that he prayed with them in the temple; that he joined with them in rites and sacrifices; that he went up annually with these and all other men to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and other solemnities—nowhere was any of these things ever made matter of reproach against him. For the same reason, so far from attempting to debar from their ceremonies even the Saducees, scoundrels and heretics as they were of the worst description, they even allowed them to ascend to the highest station of the priesthood. In the meantime, with what hatred those two parties, Pharisees and Saducees, regarded each other, is evident from Josephus and from the Acts of the Apostles. With outstretched arms would either party have embraced this method of being avenged of the adverse faction, had such a proceeding been permitted them by the law.

XIII.

But indeed they could not possibly debar the

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wicked from eating the Passover, seeing it was not eaten in presence of the priests, but in the people's own private houses: as we read that Christ celebrated his last Passover with his disciples. At that season all the people in a manner discharged the priestly function, as Philo Judæus, speaking of the Passover, testifies in these words—"In that feast," says he, "all the people in a body sacrifice, not excepting their priests; the law granting to every individual, on an appointed day every year, themselves to offer sacrifices." And if there were too few persons in a single house to eat the whole lamb, they where commanded to join with them as many of their neighbours as would be sufficient, (Exod. xii. 4). On the same principle they seem to have proceeded in the matter of circumcision, with this difference, that circumcision might be performed elsewhere, whereas the Passover could be celebrated at Jerusalem alone; for I do not remember to have read that the presence of a priest was required at circumcision.

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XIV.

Thus, also, did the illustrious forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist, uniformly proceed. For when Pharisees and Saducees came to him, whose characters he well knew, and therefore called them openly a generation of vipers—he baptized them, as well as publicans and all others who came to him (Matt. and Luke iii). And he did so, that they, repenting of their former life, might reform, and so flee from the wrath of God that was to come. It is very unlikely that men covered with so many crimes, yea, impiously and publicly denying the doctrine of a resurrection, would have been admitted to baptism by such an individual as John, unless he had known that the law did not exclude such persons. For, as was before said, the law debarred no one who was circumcised, unless he were unclean, or a leper.

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XV.

Further, this uncleanness, which excluded from the public worship of the Jews, was a legal ceremony: it was not defilement in life or conduct: for he was not unclean who committed some sin or crime; but he was unclean who attended a funeral, touched a corpse, or the issues of the human body, or a menstruous woman, and such like. For this reason the Pharisees would not enter into the Judgment-hall, when they had delivered Jesus into the hands of Pilate to be put to death, lest they should be hindered from eating the Passover. Unquestionably, the Mosaical uncleanness did not so typify our sins, that, in like manner as persons defiled with it were debarred from the tabernacle and from society with other men, so sins among us should be restrained and punished by refusing the sacraments to sinners, or excluding them from the visible church. And this is made most evident by the following reasons:

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1*st*, During the period when the law of uncleanness was in force, wicked persons were not visited with the same punishment as the unclean, though at the same time there were multitudes of wicked persons. How then can it be thought probable that, after these ceremonies are removed or abolished, their use had been to signify that immoralities should be punished as uncleanness had been?

2*dly*, Moses would have been, on this supposition, palpably inconsistent with himself—admitting actually to the temple and ceremonies those who were wicked; and yet intimating, by the exclusion of the unclean, that the wicked ought to be debarred. For it is undeniable, that no one was excluded from the temple and the society of the people, on account of the viciousness of his life, provided he had not contracted legal contamination by touching a dead body or the like. So that Moses would have punished those who were only the types of the wicked, but those who were really wicked he would have allowed to escape (so far as this punishment is concerned). And so he would

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at the same time have both denied and affirmed the same thing.

3*dly*, The legal uncleanness was a quality, a certain stain of body, whereas crimes are operations, and consist in action. For the cause and root of crimes is born with us, and is not punished by men so long as it produces no fruits; otherwise all men should be excommunicated; inasmuch as we shall never be delivered from this corruption of soul, so long, at least, as we continue in the present world. But that other defilement, being a bodily uncleanness, is punished by seclusion from the society of others, even though it produce no fruit, the unclean party committing nothing contrary to the law. The deeds or offences of the unclean, if, while in that state, they were guilty of any violation of the law, were, like other offences, visited by the civil magistrate.

4*thly*, Our adversaries allow that *all kinds* of sins are not to be punished with excommunication, whereas *every kind* of uncleanness the law required to be punished with exclusion from the tabernacle and the public sacrifices.

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Wherefore it follows, that legal uncleanness could not typify every sort of sins.

5*thly*, No one who sins unwillingly is a proper subject of excommunication: whereas, generally, men were rendered unclean against their will, and without their fault, yea, to their own great sorrow. What guilt attached to him, *cui noctu nolenti ac dormienti semen forte profluxisset? cujus uxori praeter spem menses eruppissent?*—to him whose children, or wife, or parents died, or any such event happened? But that those crimes, on account of which, some fancy, people should be debarred from the sacraments, are voluntary acts, is too plain to need proof.

6*thly*, There was appointed, for one who killed another beside and against his will, a much severer penalty than exclusion from the sacraments during some days or weeks—which was almost the severest punishment for uncleanness. Since, then, an involuntary, and, therefore, very trivial crime, was followed by a severer penalty than the most aggravated legal uncleanness was, we may easily see that the

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penalty inflicted on the latter was not to be transferred to the punishment of crimes.

7*thly*, It very often happened that even the most pure and upright persons became unclean, and so were restrained from entering the temple and using the sacrifices, while to both these the most immoral had at the same time free access. But if, in the Church of God, wickedness should be punished in the same way as uncleanness, the immoral should much more have been excluded than the unclean.

8*thly*, It is evident that, at no time, and in no place, has God absolutely forbidden all legal uncleanness. For surely he willed that persons should wait on the dying; should attend those who were sick of loathsome diseases; should bury the dead; and, finally, should purify those who were unclean, by which means they themselves contracted uncleanness (Numb. xix.): he therefore willed that all legal uncleanness should not be avoided. But God prohibited all immoralities always to all men; neither hath he permitted any man at any time, or in any place, to act immorally.

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9*thly*, God appoints that crimes should be repressed by fire, sword, strangling, stoning, stripes, fines, imprisonment, and other penalties of the same kind: but he appoints that they who were ceremonially unclean should be washed with water, and should be cleansed by other means of the same description.

10*thly*, He was not held a wicked and condemned person who was pronounced unclean according to the definition of uncleanness given by the law, and who remained so to the day of his death, — as, for example, when women during their menses, or men afflicted with an issue, or with leprosy, died. But he, who so lives, that even at his death, good and righteous men would pronounce him deserving of excommunication, cannot be considered otherwise than an immoral and impious person.

11*thly*, The legal uncleanness had no place except among one people, and during a certain period. But vices sprung up everywhere among all nations, in every place, and at all times. Since, then, vices both were punished and were judged worthy of punishment, as well

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among other nations as among the Jews, before the legal uncleanness was introduced; it undoubtedly typified something else than this method of punishing the wicked, (excommunication,) which certainly is far too slight to satisfy the justice of God.

12*thly*, Every one was purified within a set period of time, or number of days, by using certain ceremonies, whatever his mind was—that is, whether he became unclean voluntarily or against his will. But no one is freed from his sins unless he is heartily sorry, and truly and seriously desires to be better, and to reform.

13*thly*, Each person's purification under the law depended on his own judgment, (except lepers and some few others,) nor had they recourse to judges or elders to determine whether they were purified or not. Our adversaries hold a different opinion regarding excommunicated individuals. For they make the fact depend on the judgment of their elders, not on the testimony of the persons themselves, declaring they are penitent for their sins.

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14*thly*, He was to be pronounced sound and clean who was totally leprous from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, if only the skin of his whole body was of one colour. While, on the other hand, he who had his skin discoloured only in one or more parts, was held to be unclean. The case is entirely different with wicked persons. For he who is entirely covered over with sins, (as the sow that hath rolled in the mire is totally covered with filth,) is not a better man than he who still retains some shadow of uprightness and piety.

15*thly*, Lepers are not enjoined to attempt any thing to obtain a cure, but they are only required to shew themselves to the priest, whose duty it was to declare whether they were cleansed or not. But bad men are enjoined to amend their lives, and to testify the sorrow of their heart by good and holy actions.

16*thly*, Many were rendered unclean by touching those things whereby others were purified, and while they were purifying others (Numb. xix). But no one deserves excommunication for doing that whereby he may heal

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and cleanse others who are defiled with sins and vices. And if you maintain that the type holds good, you ought to grant that they all should be excommunicated, who, by means of this penalty, (excommunication,) endeavour to bring back others into the way of salvation.

17*thly*, The legally unclean were not prohibited from joining in *all* the sacraments, since they were required, under pain of capital punishment, to observe all the private rites of their country; to keep the Sabbath; and to celebrate the Feast of Expiation, (Lev. xvi. and xxiii.,) which had a principal reference to the work of Christ. For, as was before remarked, they were not looked upon as men condemned, or whose salvation was to be despaired of. But whether, according to the opinion of our adversaries, the case of excommunicated individuals is not altogether different, is a matter that requires not any further proof.

18*thly*, The ceremonially unclean defiled clothes, houses, places, persons, with whom they came in contact. But vicious persons did not pollute the temple, or other things, or persons,

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unless these participated in their vices. The temple was not defiled as often as adulteresses were brought into it (Numb. v. and John viii). Neither did the publican desecrate the temple when he went up with the Pharisee to pray (Luke xviii). Assuredly the Pharisee, though he considered the publican a wicked man in comparison of himself, did not suppose he was contaminated by him. When Judas threw down the wages of his treachery in the temple, we do not read that he polluted the temple: nor do we find that the Pharisees complained of this, though they would not enter the Judgment-hall lest they should be defiled. But, if there had been seen in the temple a woman labouring under her menstruation or other issue, or any one who had attended a funeral, or who had touched, though unwittingly, a dead body, everything in the temple would have been unclean; neither would it have been lawful to sacrifice or to perform any act of worship therein, till it had been purified again. On the same principle, Judas did not pollute the Last Supper by his evil deeds: though it would have been

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polluted had either he or any other of the disciples touched any dead thing.

19*thly*, In short, the legal uncleanness was a type of our perverse and corrupt nature, which will not be admitted into heaven, unless it has been washed and cleansed by the purifying blood of Christ. For, as the tabernacle typified heaven, expulsion from it prefigured condemnation, or exclusion from the heavenly Jerusalem; so did purification by common or by lustral water denote cleansing by the death of Christ. The quality (ceremonial impurity) was, therefore, a figure, not of a *work*, but of a quality—even our depraved nature: neither did it prefigure in what manner sins ought to be punished, (in the church on earth,) for this Moses taught in plain and explicit terms; but what should be our condition in a future life, to wit, in that heavenly kingdom which the land of Canaan did shadow forth. All this is clearly enough indicated in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse. Augustin, writing against the Donatists, thinks it alludes to the exclusion of heretics: but from the numerous and wide

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differences between the two kinds of uncleanness, even a blind man may see that the one could not typify the other, as our adversaries contend it does.

XVI.

Although Moses appoints no other ground of exclusion but that we have spoken of, I shall yet furnish a reply to another objection which may seem to arise from his words: For, thus some might argue, Moses commanded the Jews to eat the Passover without leaven, which Paul (1 Cor. v.) explains to denote impurity of life. Some may therefore think it a very reasonable conclusion from this, that, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, which has come in place of the Passover, the wicked should be excluded.

XVII.

I answer, 1*stly*, that it is very improbable

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indeed, that God should command something in plain words, and yet, at the same time, should, in a figurative way, forbid the same thing. He enjoins plainly, by an ordinance sundry times repeated, that every male should celebrate the Passover, except those who were unclean, or detained on a journey. He could not, therefore, intend, by the figure of the leaven, to deter any other but these. There were bad men in abundance who were present at those celebrations, so that there was no need of typifying them by leaven; for the wicked were as visible as the leaven was. Seeing, then, types are not adopted of things which are present, and equally perceptible by the senses as the types,—much less, if the things typified are much more open and common than the types themselves, it is vain to fancy that here the leaven was a type of the wicked. 2*dly*, Moses does not appoint, that he who had eaten of leaven should be debarred from partaking of the Passover, but that he should be put to death. Wherefore it would follow, that profligate persons should not be excluded from the

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Lord's Supper, but executed—a consequence which I should admit without difficulty, and which I even desire. For nothing do I more wish, than that a most rigorous discipline of manners should be maintained in the Christian Church;—only let it be that which God has appointed, not that which men have devised.

3*dly*, The Jews were permitted to eat leaven the whole year, except those seven days of unleavened bread, which commenced with the Passover. But, if you will apply this to the Lord's Supper, you must grant that Christians may lead an unholy life all the year through, provided only they abstain from their sins at the time when the Communion is celebrated.

4*thly*, Moses speaks of leaven as excluding, not from the other sacraments, but from the Passover alone; so that it would follow, that the wicked should be excluded only from the Lord's Supper, not from baptism.

5*thly*, The Apostle does not compare the Jewish festival of the Passover with the Lord's Supper, but with our whole life. He says *we* are unleavened, as being washed by the blood

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of Christ, and so cleansed from all our leaven. And, therefore, he says, it is consistent that we live not in the leaven of malice, but with the unleaven of sincerity and truth. There is a wide difference between speaking of leaven simply, and the leaven *of malice and wickedness*. This latter phrase, everybody must see, is to be taken figuratively. And an anagogical or figurative sense, as the schoolmen say, is not to be made the foundation of an argument. Assuredly, whatever we may understand by leaven, the doctrine of excommunication can hence derive no countenance or support against a distinct Divine precept.

XVIII.

"But," some one may object, "Paul here makes mention of the Passover." But what is that to the present question? People speak as if the name Passover were, in the New Testament, given to the Lord's Supper. "Christ," says the Apostle, "is our Passover, sacrificed

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for us," not "the Lord's Supper is our Passover." His meaning is: As the Jews, after they had commenced their festival with eating the pascal lamb, continued during the whole week thereafter to eat unleavened bread; so you also, who have begun to believe in Christ, and are rendered unleavened by being purified with his blood, ought to spend the whole of your week that remains—that is, your whole lives in holiness and purity.

XIX.

Now, that nothing inconsistent with this can be found in the other books of the Old Testament, may be inferred from this one consideration, that the succeeding generations of Jews were to live according to the institutions and laws of Moses; and they were not permitted to change anything relating to the worship of God. Indeed, the pious judges, priests, prophets, and kings, so far from driving any one away from the sacraments and sacrifices, in-

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vited all the people to them, and that with the greatest earnestness. The history of the holy king Hezekiah is well known; who (2 Chron. xxx.) assembled all the children of Israel to keep the Passover, both those who, he knew, had lately burned incense to the heathen gods or demons, and those who, on account of the shortness of the notice, had not time to purify themselves. From which passage we may perceive, that the sacraments are inducements and incitements to piety; and by the frequent use of these ordinances, rather than by being deprived of them, the people were to be rendered better, at least if they were properly and faithfully instructed.

XX.

Wherefore, excommunication cannot be defended from Isa. ch. i., Ps. l., and many other similar passages, in which God is said not to desire the sacrifices and oblations of the wicked; because, in all such places, it is the abuse which

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God reprehends — men fancying they had eminently pleased Him when they had performed those external services, without any regard to their inward dispositions. Further, He does not require the prophet, or, through him, any one else, to debar the wicked from the sacrifices and ceremonies, but he intimates that he would not listen to their prayer, unless they amended their lives. The principle of the outward government of the Church is altogether different from that of God's disposition toward us, either approving or condemning our conduct. *Lastly*, From the very same passages, by the self-same mode of reasoning, it might be proved that no wicked person should be permitted to call on the name of the Lord. And neither to praise God, nor to give him thanks will be allowed them; for the ministers and elders will behove to interdict sinners from all such exercises: for God turns his face away from the wicked as much when they pray, or praise, or give thanks, as when they communicate; as is manifest from those quoted, and from all other similar passages. But if this conclusion is absurd, so also is that.

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XXI.

Neither doth that make against us which is recorded in the 10th chapter of Ezra. For that was a political matter, and not connected with the sacraments. For the magistrate, and not Ezra the priest alone, (though he also partook of the magistracy; for, according to the testimony of Josephus, the people were then ruled by an aristocracy, though having also a chief ruler,) issued an edict that, under pain of confiscation of goods, and of exclusion, not from the sacraments and sacrifices, but from the people who had returned from captivity, all of them should assemble at Jerusalem within two days. Our question at present is, not whether the magistrate have the right to punish in that or any other way? but, whether the priests could keep from the sacrifices those of the people who were dissolute and unholy in their lives? Ezra could not do this; for it was contrary to the command of God. Moreover, Moses did not appoint that kind of punishment, viz., exclusion

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from the sacraments, to be inflicted on men who had married foreign wives (Deut. vii). And how Ezra was to punish the transgressors of that law is set down in chap. vii., v. 26, of his own Book, namely, by death, exile, bodily tortures, fines, chains, or imprisonment. In short, it was a quite different thing to be expelled from the society of them who had returned out of captivity, from being excluded from the temple and the sacrifices. For it is evident from Exod. xii. and Numb. xi. that even foreigners were admitted to join in celebrating the Passover — provided they had been circumcised. At that time, also, numbers of those who had either remained in Judea, or, though Gentile by birth, had forsaken the impurities of the heathen, and had adopted the profession of Judaism, united with all the rest of the people in keeping the Passover: as we read in the conclusion of the 6th chapter of Ezra. Such as these were not forbidden the sacrifices, the temple, or the ceremonies, although they were not reckoned among the number of those who had returned from Babylon. In like manner

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some of the priests were removed from the function of the priesthood because they were not able to shew their genealogies, as appears from the 2d chapter of the same Book. From all which it is plain, that the cause of excommunication cannot possibly draw any support from this passage.

XXII.

There remains to be considered only that *casting out of the synagogue*, with which some marvellously please themselves, alleging in defence of excommunication what is written on this subject in the 9th, 12th, and 16th chapters of John's Gospel. But here, also, an abundance of solid answers are at hand.

The name, *synagogue*, sometimes signifies a *place*, as when Jesus is said to have entered into a synagogue, and there to have taught; and sometimes an *assembly*, or *congregation*, whether convened in the place called a synagogue or elsewhere; as when the Pharisees

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are spoken of as desiring the highest seats at feasts, and the first places in the *synagogues*. In this same signification, or in both these, the word is taken in Matt. x. 17, and xxiii. 6, when Christ foretells that the saints should be beaten in the synagogues; also in Matt. x., Mark xiii., Luke xii. and xxi., in which places the term denotes a public tribunal; and so the word is frequently applied by the LXX., as we may afterwards observe in a more convenient place. In the passages last referred to, as in Matt. x. 17; and Mark xiii. 9, the words *συνεδριον*, council, and *συναγωγη*, synagogue, are so used as to show that by the two words one and the same thing is meant: in other places, as for example, Luke xxi. 12, there are added to the term synagogue, the words *rulers* and *kings*— (or as the same Evangelist expresses it, chapter xii. 11, *magistrates* and *powers*); so also Matt. x. 17, and Mark xiii. 9.

From comparing these passages with each other, it most distinctly appears that our Lord and his Apostles, in these last quoted passages, understood nothing else by the word *council* or

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synagogue, but the law-courts of the Jews, which were composed of several members; as the courts of the Gentiles are denoted by the words "power," "authority," "rulers," "kings." In these, one person almost always presided, or if more than one administered justice, they did it in the name of one. In these meetings or synagogues, those who were pronounced guilty were punished corporally, Matt. x. xxii., Acts xvii. xxvi., and 2 Cor. xxxi. 24, a passage, which any one who peruses Deut. xxv. will easily understand. The casting out any one of such a synagogue as this, was thus a kind of political disgrace and punishment, and so a sort of banishment from the locality; as we may infer from what is said Luke iv. 29. This kind of casting out cannot be transferred to the sacraments, which were celebrated only in the temple, (and there was but one temple,) and at Jerusalem;—excepting circumcision and a few others. The punishment appears to have resembled that of which we lately spoke, when expounding the passage which occurs in Ezra. Such synagogues existed in all the cities, as

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every one knows. So that whether the name synagogue, in St. John, be understood as denoting a place, or an assembly of persons; neither way does it in the least militate against our opinion. But however much it may be denied that this matter was political, this at least would be granted, that it pertained to religion. I am, however, not disputing at present whether an individual who holds erroneous opinions regarding religion should be excommunicated. For the Pharisees, says John ix., made an agreement to this effect, that they who acknowledged Jesus to be Christ should be cast out of the synagogue. And that to be in the synagogue was an honour merely, and to be cast out of it a disgrace, may be inferred from what we are told, (John xii.,) that certain of the chief rulers of the Jews—among whom probably was Nicodemus himself—had believed in Jesus, but durst not confess him because of the Pharisees, lest they should by them be cast out of the synagogue; and the reason which is given is this—"because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Besides

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it is manifest, that the publicans, although circumcised, were not admitted into the synagogues—as we are at present using the word synagogue—for the Pharisees would not even endure to speak with them, and they made this very thing a reproach against Christ, that he kept company with such. But I think no man in his senses will pretend that those same persons were not admitted to the Passover, to the temple, and the sacrifices.

Wherefore, there is a very wide difference between exclusion from the synagogue, and exclusion from the sacraments and institutions appointed by God—as evidently appears from all that has been said: and what is told us in Acts v. makes this point quite clear. For the disciples, though bitterly reproached by the synagogue, yet taught daily in the temple. Of how many synagogues was the Apostle Paul cast out? Yet the Jews never found fault with him for entering into the temple, or for taking order that an oblation should be presented for himself and others. And, finally, I would add this observation: however certainly

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it could be shewn that, with the Pharisees, exclusion from the synagogue was the same thing as prohibition of the sacraments—which cannot be shewn ever at any time to have been the case—still it would only follow, that they had done this, as they did many things besides—in violation of a clear precept of Moses; and, therefore, instead of imitating their conduct, our duty would be to condemn it. For we should live, not according to the examples of men, but the laws of God; neither, unless we subvert all morality, must we imitate any example which is at variance with the Divine command. Let us follow good examples, and the examples of the good—not those of the bad—or which are themselves bad and condemned. This point I have discussed in so many words, yet briefly—because certain persons marvellously flatter themselves with this argument, deceiving, in the meantime, themselves and others.

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XXIII.

This, then, remains firm and immovable that, in the Old Testament, none was debarred from the sacraments on account of the immorality of his conduct: but, on the contrary, the pious priests, prophets, judges, kings, and finally that most illustrious and holy forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist, instead of debarring, rather invited all the people to the celebration of the sacrament, as the law required them to do.

XXIV.

But that the sacraments of the Old Testament were in substance, and as regards the things signified by them, the same as ours, Paul has clearly shewn (1 Cor. x). Wherefore, unless it can be proved that the law of Moses, in this particular, has been abolished or altered, it cannot be lawful for any man to introduce what is contrary to it.

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XXV.

For, as we properly urge against the Anabaptists this very valid argument, that, because baptism has come in the place of circumcision, and Christ nowhere forbade the baptizing of infants, therefore we are no less permitted to baptize our infants than the Jews were to circumcise theirs: So, in the case before us, we may reason no less conclusively in this manner. The Lord's Supper has come in the room of the Passover. But men's sins were not punished by denying them the Passover, nor was any one kept back from it on account of his sins; but, on the contrary, all the people, especially males, were, by the law of Moses, invited to join in the celebration of it. And seeing we nowhere read that this principle has been superseded, or abolished, therefore the people's sins are not to be punished *now* by refusing them the Lord's Supper, neither is any one for that reason to be kept back.

So much regarding the Old Testament: it is

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proper we should now descend to the times of Christ and his Apostles—that is, to the New Testament.

XXVI.

Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in like manner, is never spoken of as having forbidden any one to partake of the sacraments; neither do we find that he ever gave instructions to his apostles that they should do any such thing. For Christ came not into the world to destroy the law, but to fulfil and perfect it. Wherefore, since the law required all the people (except the unclean) to celebrate the Passover, He desired to forbid none.

XXVII.

It is evident, moreover, that our Lord never censured any person for using the sacraments, or for going frequently to the temple and the

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sacrifices: but that he only admonished them to use these ordinances properly, according to the will of God and the law. He himself entered always into the same temple with Pharisees, with Saducees, with publicans, and all others, bad and good alike: He assisted at the same sacrifices with them; He used the same sacraments of which the whole Jewish community partook; and, also, he received from John the Baptist the same baptism which was administered to all those nefarious characters just mentioned.

XXVIII.

For the same reason he did not hinder Judas, who betrayed him, from eating the last pascal lamb; but he sat down with the other eleven disciples. Though, indeed, there are some who attempt to prove that Judas was not present at the celebration of the New Supper, (which it will be very difficult, not to say impossible, to make out satisfactorily from the Scriptures,) but that he had gone out before this was instituted

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by our Lord: this, at least, none will dare to deny, that he had been admitted, according to the law, to eat the Passover. Which being admitted, our argument remains unshaken. For, whether Judas went out before the Lord's Supper was instituted, or whether he did not, (which last has always been the generally received opinion, and is the more probable,) this, at least, can never be doubted, that he had been present at the former feast, (the Passover,) and that he was not openly required to abstain from the second (the Lord's Supper). Besides, we do not read that our Lord ordered Judas to go out, so as not to be present at the New Supper: so that, if he really went out, he did so, not because he was so required, but of his own accord. But the question we are concerned about is, What Christ did? not what Judas did? It is enough for our argument that the Lord did not command Judas to abstain from the Supper then instituted.

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XXIX.

Frivolous and trifling is what is alleged in defence of that notion, that Judas was not to be kept back, *because his wickedness was not public;* for by this time he had settled with the Pharisees for the price of his treachery. Moreover, during the very Supper itself, Jesus unfolded the matter to his disciples, and made the wickedness of Judas public; so that there was the greater occasion for making his case an example. Finally, whatever be in this, he was at least before then known to be a thief. And though he was such, the Lord nevertheless committed the ministry to him, and supplied him with power of casting out demons, of healing the sick, and performing other miracles: and, in short, all the years he was with Christ, he was allowed to keep the Passover with the other disciples. Is not this a sufficient demonstration, that it is not the will of Christ to punish the wicked by excluding them from the sacraments? Certainly, it is a greater matter to choose a bad

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man for the ministry, than to admit such to the Lord's Supper; but we see that our Lord admitted Judas to both.

XXX.

This also is worthy of notice, that the disciples, during the celebration of the first Supper itself, began to dispute among themselves about pre-eminence and dignity, but none of them was excluded for that reason. Nay, Jesus willed and commanded that *they all should drink of that cup*, as we learn from the 26th chapter of Matthew, and as Mark informs us (chapter 14th) they actually did; and the same principle, in this case, applies to the bread as to the cup. What can we suppose Christ intended by these words, but to confirm what God had formerly commanded by Moses, namely, that no baptised person, who wished to be present, should be excluded from that public and solemn thanksgiving? It hence appears, that no one who professes Christianity, and permits himself

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to be instructed in it, should be kept back from the Lord's Table.

XXXI.

It is not the will of Christ that his kingdom in these lands, (I speak of that which is outward,) should be circumscribed within narrower limits than he appointed for it anciently among the Jews. Wherefore, as God required all that were outwardly circumcised to partake in the same sacraments and ceremonies, but appointed that they who were guilty of crimes should be restrained and punished with the sword and other such penalties; so among us now, it is the will of Christ that all baptised persons, or Christians, who hold the pure doctrines of the Gospel, should unite in the same ceremonies and sacraments, but that the immoral should be visited by the magistrate with death, banishment, imprisonment, and the like. To this the parables of the Net, the Marriage-supper, and the Tares, seem to point.

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XXXII.

In the writings of the Apostles, no fewer or less plain and conclusive arguments to the same purpose present themselves. The first is this, that the Apostles are not found anywhere to have taught or exercised this excommunication: which argument, though of itself inconclusive, is rendered irresistible, when we consider that the Apostles did, during their whole lives, most strictly observe the laws of Moses, except in so far as these had been abolished by their Master; as any one may discover from the 21st and 28th chapters of the Book of Acts alone. Wherefore they never either attempted, or wished to attempt, excluding any person who professed himself a Christian, and orthodox, from our sacraments, which differ from the sacraments of the old dispensation merely in the signs, and in having reference to events past instead of future. For the Apostles never either did or taught anything contrary to those precepts of Moses, which Christ had not abrogated, but they ob-

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served the law after that with as much strictness as they had done before the death of Christ; as the chief of the Apostles testify in the passage just referred to. For the Apostles permitted the Gentile Christians only to live without observing the law of Moses, not the Jews converted to Christianity—a circumstance to which particular attention should be paid, on account of our following argument. And, as regards the substance of their doctrine, they inculcated nothing inconsistent with the teaching of Moses and the Prophets; since, if they had done so, what they spoke would not have been judged by the Bereans agreeable to the Scriptures.

XXXIII.

I would say more—that in support of the doctrine of Moses, (which also is that I maintain,) many arguments may be found in the writings of Paul, but none in support of an opposite opinion. For the Apostle (1 Cor. viii.) prohibited from the sacrament neither those who

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still thought "that an idol was something," nor those conceited and puffed-up gnostics, who openly ate, with profane and impious worshippers of idols, of the things offered in sacrifice to idols in the very εἰδωλειον, that is, the temple, or at least *triclinium*, appointed for a solemn and public idol banquet—a practice which God plainly forbade by Moses (Exod. xxxiv.), by the Apostle (Acts xv.), and finally by John (Rev. ii). This was not less heinous a sin, than if a person nowadays should dare to attend the Popish Mass: as any one may readily gather from the 10th chapter alone of the same Epistle. For, in this passage, the Apostle proves that they who joined in the idol sacrifices, no less declared, by that act of theirs, that they were associates and partakers, κοινωνους, with the devil, than they testified, by receiving the Lord's Supper, that they were members of Christ's mystical body.

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XXXIV.

Further, in the same passage (1 Cor. x.) Paul thus reasons: "As God spared not those of old who lusted after evil things,—idolaters, fornicators, tempters of Christ, murmurers,—although they had been baptised with the same baptism as all the rest, and had eaten the same spiritual bread, and had drank the same spiritual drink,—so neither will he spare you, as many of you as defile yourselves with the like iniquities, although you all eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup, of which all the children of God partake. From these expressions we may clearly see, 1*stly*, That our sacraments, and those of the ancient Church, are the same, so far as the substance which is internal, or heavenly, is concerned:—otherwise the Apostle's reasoning would be of no force. 2*dly*, It is evident that, in both cases, many very wicked persons, and even publicly known to be such, were admitted. 3*dly*, This is also plain, that no one was ordered to abstain from

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the sacraments in the way excommunicated persons are ordered to abstain: for the Apostle does not say that such characters as those ought to be debarred, but he foretells that God will punish them in the same manner in which the ancient Israelites had been punished. Some of these Moses killed by the Levites (Exod. xxxii.); others God destroyed by fire, by serpents, by the sword, and by the earth cleaving asunder. So it happened also to the Corinthians, many of whom the Apostle affirms to have been afflicted with diseases, and many even to have been punished with death.

XXXV.

In the following chapter, (1 Cor. xi.,) Paul speaks of the disputations of those who fomented divisions, of those who intoxicated themselves in the very act of keeping the Lord's Supper, and of those who were stained with other crimes; but none of these does he require to be prevented communicating. At least, he speaks not

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a word of any such prohibition, though he suggests far minuter remedies; as, for example, that "they who hunger should eat at home." But how was it possible for him, in this passage, to pass over in silence such a thing as excommunication, if he approved of it, and thought it necessary for the Church? The Apostle knew that the law appointed otherwise, and that the use of sacraments in the Church was not to punish the people's sins by refusing them these ordinances. Wherefore he requires that *every one should examine himself.* He does not appoint that some should examine and approve the rest. Besides, he exhorts all of them that they study to eat worthily, lest any one eat judgment to himself. He by no means commands that they who would eat unworthily should be debarred, but he threatens them with chastisement from the Lord. The whole body of communicants he divides, according to their opposite characters, into two classes; namely, those who eat worthily, and those who eat unworthily; neither of which classes does he forbid to eat, but he desires that all should eat worthily.

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XXXVI.

Afterwards, in the Second Epistle, ch. xii. and xiii., he does not threaten with removal from the Lord's Table those who had not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they had committed, but, according to the authority and power given him by God, he shews,—as in his writings he often did,—that he would strictly and severely take cognisance of their conduct; but exclusion from the sacraments, concerning which is the present question, he nowhere teaches, neither doth he enjoin either Presbyters or any others to practise this. But if he had wished in this manner to restrain vicious persons, he would have directed that they should be removed from the sacraments till they reformed—especially as, before this, he had ordained elders in the same Church, (1 Cor. vi.,) and had given them directions for their better celebrating the Lord's Supper. But of this we shall perhaps say more afterwards.

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XXXVII.

As in the account given of the celebration of the sacraments we see no mention is made of excommunication, so neither in the history of their institution can anything warranting that practice be discovered. Nor in its explanations of their ends and use does the Scripture mention this as one of them. But if they had been given to the Church for this purpose, that they might serve to punish sins, or the persons guilty of sins, some mention of it would have been made in the one class of passages or the other. The ends for which the Lord's Supper was instituted are these, that we should solemnly commemorate the Lord's death, and publicly render him thanks for our redemption; that we should be reminded, and by our presence should testify, that we have no food or drink that can give life, but Christ crucified, and his blood shed for us; that we should declare we are penitent for our past life; that we are thinking of a better; that we embrace the Christian doctrine;

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that we are members of Christ; that we belong to his Church, in which we should desire piously and purely to live henceforth, and to die. Has the Scriptures anywhere forbidden any person to do these things? "But some," you will say, "are often found to return to their former temper of mind, and are made no better." I answer, that he who at present (by the influence of the Holy Spirit) has the sentiments I have described, is not debarred from the sacraments by anything said in Scripture. Whether he shall persevere in that holy resolution, and how long, God knows. It is ours always to hope the best regarding all men, even though we should be often deceived, and also from the heart to beseech God to establish both them and ourselves in what is good. In the meantime, if any one leads an unholy life, he should be reproved, and admonished to examine himself, lest he eat and drink judgment to himself, as the Apostle teaches.

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XXXVIII.

Finally, I ask, Are the sacraments superior in authority or dignity to the Word? Are they more useful or necessary? None of those who have been saved, were saved without the Word; but without the sacraments, especially without the Lord's Supper, there doubtless might be, and there have been, many saved,—who, however, did not despise these ordinances. So seems the Apostle to have judged, when he wrote that he was sent, not to baptise, but to preach the Word. Do not almost all divines hold the sacraments to be visible words, and to exhibit to the eyes what words express to the ear? Why, then, do we go about to exclude nobody from the Word, while from the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, we would exclude some, and that contrary to, or at least without, the express command of God? Because, say they, the Word was appointed for all men, the sacraments only for those who are converted. I know it; and I am not speaking of admitting Mohammedans

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or unconverted pagans, but those who are called by God into his Church, and engrafted into it, who approve of its doctrines, and who appear at least desirous to use the sacraments properly.

XXXIX.

Thus far have we unquestionably proved that neither Christ nor his Apostles spoke a single word, or gave any example, of this method of correcting, or rather restraining vicious persons. Wherefore, since neither the Old nor the New Testament requires this method of punishing transgressors, but a different method is spoken of in both, we feel warranted in concluding that excommunication, (so far forth as it is a driving of men from the sacraments on account of the sins of their life and conversation,) is rather a human invention than any law of God.

It seems necessary now, then, that we consider what the maintainers of a contrary opinion allege in its defence; and that we prove it has no force whatever in establishing their doctrine.

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XL.

A precept to this purpose is, they say, extant in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, and in the Epistles of St. Paul; while an example is found in 1 Cor. v., also in 1 Tim. i. Of these passages we will treat in order, and first of the passage in Matthew.

XLI.

The intention of Christ, in that chapter, was not to institute a new government, or a form of putting excommunication in force, but to teach his disciples in what way they should avoid scandal in repelling private injuries. For since, when men are forward to go to law in vindicating their rights, (especially before heathen and ungodly magistrates, such as those the Jews were at that time under,) they very often occasion scandal to the weak; our Lord exhorts them, in the first place, rather to pass over injuries, than

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in every case have recourse to the magistrate. In this, our Lord did nothing else but recal to the minds of his disciples what Moses had commanded (Lev. xix. 17, 18), which also Syracides, in his nineteenth chapter, has repeated more at large. Next, he enjoins them, if perchance they are compelled to bring their cause before a magistrate, not to accuse their Jewish brethren before the Roman tribunals, until they had sought assistance to no purpose from their own Jewish magistrates—that so they might avoid occasion of scandal. A similar precept the apostle Paul delivers to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. vi.,) a passage which is a kind of exposition of that now under consideration,) with the design of preventing the Christians pursuing litigations against each other in the heathen courts of law. So that the genuine sense of the passage before us (Matt. xviii.) is to this effect: When thy brother, that is, a Jew, does thee an injury, do thou thyself endeavour to effect a reconciliation. If thy own efforts fail, take with thee two or three others, and make the same attempt. If even by this means thou obtainest not redress, tell it to the

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church, or congregation, that is, to the magistrate of thy own people and religion. But if he refuse to listen to him also, thou mayest, without scandalizing any one, proceed against him in the same way in which thou wouldst against a publican or a heathen, who did thee an injury—and who would not regard a summons to appear before any but the Roman tribunals.

XLII.

That such is the proper and legitimate interpretation of this passage, is distinctly shewn by the whole connection of the discourse, but especially by the conclusion, and by all the circumstances. 1*st*, It is not regarding those grave and public crimes against the Jewish religion, and the rites of their country, (the cognizance of which belonged to the Sanhedrim,) that Christ is here discoursing; but he is speaking of injuries between private persons,—power of forgiving which any one had against whom the injury was committed. What I have now said

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evidently appears from this, that the whole discourse is constructed in the singular number. "*If thy* brother sin against *thee*, do thou reprove him between him and thee alone: Do *thou* tell it to the church: Let him be to *thee*," &c. The same form of speech Luke also employs (xvii. 3, 4), "If thy brother sin against *thee*." And again, "If seven times in a day he sin against *thee*, and turn to *thee* and say, I repent, *thou* shalt forgive him." We cannot interpret *against thee*, to mean *against the church;* else, when afterward it is said, *Tell it to the church;* the meaning would be, *O church, tell it to the church.* Neither can the phrase, *sin against thee*, signify the same as *sin with thy knowledge;* for neither will the whole discourse here, nor the particular words used, nor yet the circumstances admit of such a gloss. Because, immediately after it is said, *between thee and him alone.* Now, to what purpose, if he sinned only with my knowledge, and not *against me* specially and alone, should I be required to admonish him when he and I were alone? why should I not rather be directed to reprove him in the pre-

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sence of those against whom he committed the offence? But Christ does not permit me to go to him in company with others, in the first instance. So that he is speaking of injuries done privately by my brother against me.

How, also, can the words of Luke, "*If he turn to thee, forgive him,*" be made to agree with that interpretation? Shall we say, here too, that *to thee* is put for *with thy knowledge?* What, then, will be the meaning of the words *forgive him?* Must the sense here, too, be this, know thou thy forgiveness of him? The prodigal (Luke xv.) "*sinned against heaven.*" Does this mean he sinned only *with the knowledge* of heaven? In what way we may injure and sin against the brethern is clear from 1 Cor. viii.; but the design of this passage is different. For, undoubtedly, the discourse here and the words used, cannot be expounded regarding other than private injuries, which thou mayest thyself pardon if the offender repent. And if the offender does not repent of his own accord, thou shouldest act thus that he may repent.

2*dly*, A proof of the same thing is furnished

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by the circumstance, that the Apostles understood no otherwise the words of Christ; as is evident from the question of Peter, Is it enough if my brother sin seven times against me, that I forgive him seven times? Peter was not ignorant that an injury which related to the church, or to many other persons, he alone neither could nor ought to forgive.

3dly, The same thing is proved by the expression, *to thee*. Our Lord does not say, let him be *to us*, *let him be to the Church*, *let him be to others*; but let him be as a publican *to thee alone*, who hast suffered or doest suffer injury from him. Though Jesus addresses all his disciples together, he nevertheless requires the person who did an injury to be as a publican *only to the individual* who was injured by him; and that even after the admonition by the Church. So that our Lord is not speaking of those things which regard the whole Church or many others; but of those which concern single individuals.

4thly, He speaks, in the passage under consideration, of such sins as we should forgive our brethren *as often as* they say they repent.

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And that transaction or remission, performed between the two alone, finished the whole dispute, as is evidently declared in the words that follow. *Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree*, &c. (xviii. 19). But a serious crime, which is committed against many persons, or against the whole Church, cannot be pardoned by one alone. And here we should remark (in passing) the use of the adverb παλιν, v. 19, by which our Lord indicates that he had said the same thing just before, though he had employed different words.

5thly, Christ is speaking here of such sins, whereof he that has committed them is not ashamed, and which he would not deny in the presence of any one. If he were speaking of other more heinous offences, and such as had reference to the Church and many other parties, there could be no occasion for taking witnesses; for a crime of that character, if secretly done, no one could be expected to confess before witnesses. But, in all the matter of which our Lord is here discoursing, those degrees of wickedness intimated by him are to

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be attended to by us (if we would not misapprehend his meaning).

6*thly*, He speaks in this place of those sins which the Church (which he refers to) does not punish; but merely dismisses the offender with a verbal reproof. For it would be useless to talk of a person *not hearing the Church*, if the sin he had committed was of a kind which the Church could visit with a public punishment.

7*thly*, This view is very distinctly inculcated by the parable which immediately follows, (xviii. 23-35,) in which we are taught that God will not forgive us our trespasses, unless from the heart we forgive, without fine or penalty, our brethren, who repent of them, their trespasses against us. But if the opinion of our opponents be correct, the Church ought not to forgive, but to exclude from the sacraments, at least for a time, until the offender shall prove his repentance to the satisfaction of elders chosen for that purpose. So, it seems, our Lord does not intend we should forgive seven times a day our offending brethren, who so often tell us they repent; but his intention is, that we should examine the

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proofs of their repentance, of which proofs Christ says not a word. He appoints no other proofs but the confession of the offender.

It is distinctly proved by these arguments, that our Lord, in this 18th chapter of Matthew, is not discoursing of offences which are to be punished with excommunication, but of minor and private injuries, and of the way of settling such matters; so that the passage has no reference to the question of excommunication. If we only look at the conclusion drawn by Christ, (verse 35,) at the end of the chapter, every shadow of doubt will be removed.

XLIII.

They who suppose that in this passage Jesus Christ instituted excommunication, are bound to shew in which of his expressions the command to that effect is contained. If they cannot shew it is contained in any of them, vain is the pretence that such a thing is here commanded. The command, then, if in this passage

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at all, must be expressed either in the phrase, *Tell it to the Church*, or in this, *Let him be to thee as a publican;* or, finally, in these other words, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth*, &c. But I shall furnish the most conclusive reasons to shew, that none of these phrases includes any such thing; and therefore, as there are no other expressions in this chapter, in which we need to seek for the doctrine of excommunication, it is vain for us to seek for it here at all.

XLIV.

The words of our Lord, *Tell it to the Church*, only prove this, that a person whom his brother had injured, and who had sought in vain a reconciliation with him, might complain of the injury he had received to the Church, or the rulers or presidents in the Church; and also, that the same Church has right and power to reprove and admonish the person who commits an injury, to the intent he may do so no more. No more power is here attributed to the Church

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than had before been assigned to the witnesses, with this only difference, that unless the witnesses had first been appealed to, the case is not to be brought before the Church. Would it not be childish to reason in this manner, The Church has the right to reprove him who commits an injury; therefore it has the right to excommunicate him, or debar him from the sacraments? "But," it may be said, "the Church has not authority to punish the guilty by corporeal inflictions or by the sword; therefore it is compelled to chastise them by exclusion from the sacraments." I answer, this consequence would not follow, even if the premises were true; and that they are false, as regards the visible Church, the whole of the Old Testament, the history of our own times, and our own eyes and senses, demonstrate. Nor could the following manner of arguing ever be shewn to be legitimate: The Church cannot punish her members with the sword; therefore she ought to debar them from the sacraments.

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XLV.

If they, against whom we argue, shall say, that excommunication is enjoined in the words, "Let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican," I reply that this is false; for by no reasons or arguments can it ever be made out that this sentence of Christ, "*Let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican*," means the same as *Let him be excommunicated*, or *excluded from the sacraments*. For, in the time of our Saviour, circumcised publicans, whether Jews or Gentiles, were *not* debarred from the sacrifices, the temple, the ceremonies, the sacraments. Indeed, our Lord appears to have joined the *publican* with the *heathen man* for this very purpose, lest any one might suppose that an exclusion from the sacraments was here enjoined by him. How could the publicans be, according to the law, repelled from the temple and the worship of God, since it was not a sin to be a collector of the public revenues, nor is that employment anywhere found to have been

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forbidden by God, neither did Christ anywhere forbid it? When the publicans questioned John the Baptist, what they must do to be saved? he did not enjoin them to desert their employment, but he exhorted them "not to exact more than was appointed" (Luke iii). Moreover, Christ did not require Zaccheus, the chief of the publicans, to lay down his office, or blame him for holding it (Luke xix). Neither do we read of him who went up to the temple to pray, and who, in the judgment of Christ, returned to his house justified, that he ceased to be a publican (Luke xviii). Nor do we find that those others who praised God, (Luke v.,) and were most dear to Jesus and his Apostles, changed their profession. In short, I would say that Holy Scripture,—in other words, that God,—never anywhere condemns or blames publicans, so far forth as they are publicans, that is, collectors of taxes; and this all men of common sense will readily grant me. And this being granted, I argue thus: God in Scripture condemns no publican, as a publican; and he whom God does not condemn, the law of God cannot require to be

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excommunicated. Therefore no publican can, according to the Divine law, be prohibited from entering the temple, and joining in the worship of God. I now sum up my argument thus: No publican could lawfully be condemned or excommunicated; but Christ directed that the person who would not hear that Church, (of which he was then speaking,) should be held as a publican; therefore he commands that he be treated as a person who, according to the law of God, could not be held execrable on this account, at least, that he was a publican.

As to what the partisans of excommunication allege, that the words, *Let him be to thee as a publican*, signify the same as if Christ had said, "Let him be to thee the same as a publican *is to the Pharisees*," it is absurd, false, and impossible. For it is incredible that Christ, on this occasion, when he determined to institute an ordinance of so great importance, and so useful and necessary for the Church, as our adversaries hold excommunication is, should have chosen to borrow a rule, which was to be observed by all

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his disciples thenceforward, from the ungodly conduct of most abandoned men.

Further, it has been proved already, that, among the Jews, no person was ever excommunicated, in the sense now understood by that term. And, finally, the whole expressions here used by Christ are at variance with the interpretation of our opponents. For our Lord is not here speaking of the Pharisees, or to them, but he is dealing with his own disciples; and he is instructing them as to the manner of avoiding scandal; and thus he speaks: If a man who has injured you will not hear the Church, let him be to you as a publican; that is, as a publican *is to you*, not as a publican is *to the Pharisees*. But it is evident that Christ and his disciples, like all other pious persons, did not abhor the publicans: they certainly did not esteem them worthy of excommunication, but ate with them daily, and lived with them.

Inasmuch as Christ joins the *heathen man* and the *publican* together, we must conclude that he refers to some circumstance which was common

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to both. But of these two the one *had* access to the temple, the other had not; so that he cannot here be speaking of excommunication. The words, "Let him be to thee as a publican," must, therefore, signify something very different from these, "Let him be to thee as an excommunicated person:" and the sense of them is this—If he (that injures thee) will not hear the Church, thou mayest, in that case, without occasioning any scandal to any one, treat him in the same manner as if thou hadst to do with a heathen or a publican. They who had a dispute with these parties, were compelled to sue them before the Roman magistrates; as is admitted with regard to the heathens, and may be clearly inferred regarding the publicans also from this, that they were the sworn servants of the Romans against their own people, and that they could expect no justice from the Pharisees and the chief men of the Jews, who regarded them as desperate scoundrels. But Christ permitted no one to proceed in this way against his brother Jew, until he had attempted that method of reconciliation here set forth by

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himself, and which had of old been prescribed in the law.

This explains the defence which St. Paul makes of himself in the last chapter of the Acts; to wit, that he would not have appealed unto Cæsar, unless he had been forced, and that he did so, not with the design of accusing the Jews, but of protecting himself from violence and wrong. And the same Apostle enjoins the Christians at Corinth, (1 Cor. vi.,) if any of them had a cause of complaint against a brother Christian, to endeavour a settlement of the matter before arbiters, chosen for the purpose, and not, in the first instance, to go to law before the heathen magistrates. But if a Christian had occasion to prosecute a *heathen*, who can doubt that he was at liberty to prosecute him in the heathen courts? In like manner, if any Christian set at nought the judgment and determination of the elders of the church, *he* also might be sued by the Christian brother, whom he had hurt or injured, before the heathen magistrate, and that without giving scandal to any one.

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XLVI.

The subject we are now handling will become yet clearer, if we reflect *what Church it was*, and how constituted, to which our Lord bids his disciples *Tell the matter*. In explaining this, I take it for a principle and foundation, which, I am confident, all will approve, and which no one denies, so far as I am aware—*that Christ is here speaking of the Church which then was*. For how could he have required his disciples to tell their matters to a Church which was nowhere to be found, and of the constitution of which they had as yet heard nothing? If he wished at this time to found a new Church, or to make known to his disciples a new form of Church government, unheard of by them till now, he would, indeed, have delivered to them a very defective institution, inasmuch as he neither taught them what persons constituted this church, nor from among whom, nor in what manner, members were to be gathered; nor what was its manner of judging, nor what punishments

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it inflicted: neither did he speak of all sorts of sins, as I have already proved, and as even those, who build the doctrine of excommunication on this passage, are forced to admit; which they do when they plainly affirm that this passage relates entirely to transgressions which are not public.

Whenever the Lord Jesus instituted any new ordinance, he omitted none of the elements essential to constitute it an ordinance. Here he simply commands—Tell it to the Church: and if any one does not hear the Church, he permits the accuser to treat him as he would a publican; he appoints no further punishment. Luke, in his relation of this passage, does not even mention these circumstances particularly, which Matthew has related: while the other evangelists make no mention of the subject at all—but we cannot suppose they would have passed over in silence a matter of such consequence and necessity, if they had understood that it was a new institution their Master was delivering.

Let us remember, besides, that the apostles were firmly persuaded that Christ was not to die,

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and that he would not change the Jewish ritual; and that they did not intimate by any word, sign, or indication, that they did not sufficiently comprehend the doctrine which their Master had been teaching them, or that they had been listening to something new or unheard before, or that they wished to ask any question regarding it, or that they wondered at it. The only thing Peter wondered at was, that he should be enjoined to forgive his brother so often.

Wherefore the apostles did not understand these words of Jesus as spoken of a new form of governing the Church, or one unknown to them before; but they believed, and rightly so, that their Master was instructing them in what cases they were permitted, without committing scandal, to accuse a brother Jew before the heathen magistrate. And even at the present day, you will not find a Jew forward to prosecute a Jew before Christian tribunals.

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XLVII.

Some one may perhaps ask, whether then, the command under consideration applies to all Christians, or only to those who live under a heathen government? I answer, that the former part of the command, namely, that which relates to attempting a reconciliation before having recourse to legal measures, applies to all Christians; and the latter part is applicable to Christians living under a government that is not Christian. Therefore Paul (1 Cor. vi.) exhorts the believers at Corinth to appoint some of themselves to settle disputes, and so prevent the necessity of prosecuting each other in the heathen courts. Who can doubt that if any of the Corinthian Christians would not abide by the decision of the persons chosen for the purpose; or if any of them who had committed an injury, continued, in spite of their sentence against him, to repeat the same, it would have been lawful, in that event, to have recourse to the Roman or heathen magistrate? Paul, indeed, when he saw he was

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to be unjustly oppressed by the Jews, appealed to Cæsar, (Acts xxv.), and how he defended himself for doing so, to the Jews living at Rome, we read in the last chapter of the Book of Acts. Any person who will take the trouble to compare the passages, Lev. xix. 17; Ecclus. xix. 13; and 1 Cor. vi. 1–7, with the passage in Matthew xviii., will more clearly understand all that we have said, and will be more thoroughly convinced of its soundness: and he will observe how manifestly the whole agree, but especially, if he will remark attentively the words of Paul and of Christ regarding the last part—namely, appealing to a heathen magistrate. This part of the instruction had no place in the times of Moses and of the writer of Ecclesiasticus; because the Jews were then subject to no foreign prince as they afterwards were to the Romans—and, therefore, by both these writers this part of the instruction is properly omitted.

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XLVIII.

And thus much, as I think, all will readily grant us, namely, that our Lord spoke regarding the Church which had an actual existence at that time in Judea; but immediately their opinions differ when the question comes to be started—What Christ understood here by the name *Church?* Inasmuch as sometimes it denotes the whole congregation or multitude; and at other times, it is applied to the senate or elders, who governed it. We find the Hebrew words, signifying *Church, assembly,* or *congregation,* used in this latter sense in Numb. xxxv. 12; Jos. xx. 6; Ps. lxxxii. 1, and elsewhere,—which words the LXX translate by συναγωγη. Besides, there are solid arguments to prove that our Saviour wished us to understand by the Church in this place, not the crowd or multitude, but the Jewish senate, συνεδριον, γερουσια, συναγωγη.

The first of these arguments is this—Christ, it is evident, did not change the form of admi-

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nistration or of government, which was established according to the law of Moses; and neither did he himself, nor did he permit his disciples to do anything in opposition to those institutions which Moses had properly established by divine authority. But Moses had directed that such causes should be submitted for decision, not to the crowd, but to the senate or συνέδριον of each place; which court was wont, at first, to sit in the gates of the several cities. Had the disciples, who all their lives most scrupulously observed the law, understood that their Master meant here to establish anything contrary to the institution of Moses, they would have been greatly offended thereby. Let any one consider how great a triumph the Pharisees would have held it, if they had been able truly to accuse Jesus of such a crime as this, that, contrary to the doctrine of Moses, he had stirred up the people against the rulers. What more plausible pretext for accusing him, as a mover of sedition, could they have desired than this, if they could have proved it, that he had attempted, in opposition to the appointment of

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God, to arm the people against the magistrates, to permit examination of witnesses, to grant them the power of summoning before them whomsoever they pleased, to authorize them to take cognisance of causes, and to determine the same?

A second argument to the same purpose is this—that Christ commanded his disciples to tell the matter to *that Church* which had the power to convene the accused party before it; to hear the cause; to examine witnesses; (for which reason we are directed at the second admonition to take with us two or three, that there may be sufficient proof of what occurs;) and power, finally, to pronounce a judicial sentence. But every body knows that these acts could not be performed by the crowd, or whole body of the people, unless they were to elect some particular persons to regulate the proceeding. For it must be a very small assembly which, without presidents or rulers, is able by itself to manage such affairs as these. And for this reason some properly hold, that this precept of our Lord, if it be understood of the whole

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assembly or multitude, can apply only in cases wherein the church consists of very few members.

Seeing, then, they who preside in that manner are nothing but a Senate or Sanhedrim, it is again rendered evident that the command of our Lord is—that the matter be told, not to the multitude, but to the Sanhedrim. But the people, in the time of Christ, possessed not the power of electing magistrates and princes for themselves. Wherefore, by "the Church," we must needs understand the Jewish Senate or Sanhedrim—which also the disciples must have understood by the expression, as the foregoing observations prove. Therefore, if by "the Church" we understand the multitude itself, the Church to which we tell the matter, must have the power of choosing for itself such a council as was the Jewish Sanhedrim. But our churches have not the power to choose such a council as the Sanhedrim was; yea, even among the Jews themselves, the people had no such power in the days of our Saviour, as I have just said.

To these considerations we may now add,

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that when the sacred writers are speaking of the whole body of the people, they commonly use the words—the *people*, the *multitude*, the *children of Israel*, and others of the same signification; as when they describe anything as having been said or done in the whole assembly, or the whole congregation. It is not necessary to insist that the same way of speaking is common at the present day;—thus we talk of having intimated a matter to the empire or to the republic, when we have intimated it to the emperor and the other governors of the empire, or to the senate of the republic. We speak of a gift having been received from the republic, when it has been received from its senate. Such phrases are so usual, that one wonders so few should have observed this regarding the passage in question. In short, Christ did not alter the established custom of his time, neither did he change the judicial proceeding then in use; as his disciples do not appear to have suspected any change or innovation. So that his meaning was, to direct his followers to tell the matter to the

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Sanhedrim before carrying it to the heathen tribunals.

XLIX.

But it is evident, from the sacred Scriptures and from history, that that Sanhedrim was a lawful magistracy, and, even in the time of Christ, it still held and exercised the power of the sword. Proof of this is found, first, in the history of our Lord's sufferings; secondly, in other testimonies to the same purpose. It (the Sanhedrim) sends armed men to apprehend Jesus; it examines witnesses against him, according to the precept of the law of Moses, as it wished it to appear; it orders Christ to be sisted before it for judgment; it delivers him bound to Pilate, having first publicly condemned him itself; it openly condemns Stephen, and gives orders to put him to death; it directs that the Apostles should be confined in the public prisons; it issues orders that the same persons should be capitally punished,

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having previously consulted publicly on the subject; it gives to Saul a command and authority to drag the saints out of other cities to Jerusalem, with a view to put them there to death. Further, the Jews themselves, (Acts xxiv.,) and the judges or Sanhedrim, most explicitly affirm this very thing by the mouth of Tertullus the orator, in their accusation of Paul before Felix — "Whom," says Tertullus, "we would have taken, and judged him according to our law." According to our law, says he, we would have condemned him, unless, he adds, Lysias had come and rescued him by force out of our hands. In the twenty-third chapter of the Book of Acts, Paul thus addresses the High Priest — "Dost thou sit to judge me according to the law, and yet command me to be smitten contrary to the law?" The same Apostle afterwards (chapter xxvi.) confesses, before King Agrippa and Festus, that in Jerusalem and elsewhere he had shut up many of the Christians in prisons, *having received power to do so from the chief priests* — that he "had given his sentence against them, that they

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should be slain": also, that in all the synagogues he had, by tortures and other penalties, compelled them to blaspheme: and, finally, that he had received power and authority from the chief priests to treat the Christians in the same manner in foreign cities also, and Damascus among the rest. I suppose Agrippa and Festus knew whether such a power belonged to the Sanhedrim, or whether it did not. Unless this power had lawfully pertained to the Sanhedrim, those Roman governors would not have pronounced Paul innocent, as they presently did; because Paul's transgression against Cæsar would have been no less than that of the Pharisees: for no less is the guilt of him who breaks the law by the permission and orders of those who have no right to give him such order or permission, than is their guilt who give such orders. But neither party is here blamed; yea, Paul is distinctly acquitted, as having done nothing worthy of bonds.

Surely Pilate would not have said, (John xviii. 31,) "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law," if such a power did not

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belong to them. When, therefore, they reply, that it was not lawful for them to put any one to death, this expression must be understood as applying to the season of the Feast, for fear of the people, as Augustin expounds the passage; or as applying to the kind of death which they were anxious Jesus should suffer, as Chrysostom understands it. With this latter interpretation the words of John, which immediately follow, admirably agree: "These things," says he, "were done, that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." To this also refers what our Lord said (Matt. xxvi. 55, 56) of their not having been able to apprehend him when he sat daily teaching in the temple, *because the Scriptures must needs be fulfilled.* Therefore they laid hold on him at a time when, on account of the nearness of the Feast, and their dread of the people, they could not put him to death. So that, being determined to endure that he should live no longer, and not having then the means of cutting him off themselves, it followed that they should deliver him up to the Romans, and

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so all things came to pass as the Lord foretold to his disciples (Matt. xx.): as the words of John in the first place intimate, and also as Augustin and Chrysostom expound. Thus also we can explain that exclamation of the multitude, "Crucify him! crucify him!" (Matt. xxvii., Mark xv., &c.)

L.

These considerations show distinctly how unfounded is the opinion which some maintain, that the Sanhedrim had not the power of the sword, that is, authority to punish capitally; and that its stoning of Stephen was a tumultuary proceeding. That it *had* the power in question I have proved by irrefragable arguments. And that Stephen was not put to death in a tumultuary manner is evident from this—that he was accused before a court; that witnesses were heard, though they were false ones; that he was led out without the city; that the same witnesses first cast stones at him, as the

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law directed, and as we may clearly infer from their laying their garments at the feet of Saul.

The same is shewn with equal clearness from history. The Romans permitted all peoples, but particularly the Jews, whether living within the bounds of Judea or without, to enjoy their own laws in matters pertaining to religion, and to live freely according to their own rites and customs — as Josephus testifies, (Antiq. Lib. xiv., c. 12, 16, and 17, according to the divisions in the Greek copies). And in the 12th chapter he cites Strabo's account of the city Cyrene, as his authority for stating, that there the Jews had a prince, who judged in their causes, and governed them just as if he had been the sovereign of an independent state. And to the same purpose is the description given us (Acts xviii.) of the conduct of Gallio, Prefect at Corinth. The same Josephus tells (xvi. 4, 5), that Herod procured from Agrippa, on behalf of the Jews throughout Asia, the enjoyment thenceforth of the same privileges which the Romans had before granted them. I mention this transaction, because some make it an

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objection to our argument, that Herod had killed the members of the Sanhedrim, and had taken all its power from it—as if others had not been substituted in the room of those who were slain. And how should Herod take away from the Jews at Jerusalem the power which the law gave them, of judging and determining in affairs pertaining to religion, when yet he was anxious to obtain and preserve the same power for the Asiatic Jews?

Further, our Lord taught, not under the government of Herod or of Archilaus, but of Pilate. Indeed, the Jews compelled even Pilate himself to carry forth again out of the city those military standards, (which he had taken care to have secretly brought into it,) lest they should tolerate images in the city contrary to the command of God. They preserved this power to themselves even till the destruction of the city, as is clearly intimated by the speech which Josephus made to them during the seige. "The Romans," says he, (De Bell. Jud. v. 26,) "demand tribute, which our forefathers were wont to pay to theirs, and, which if they obtain,

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they will neither plunder the city, nor interfere at all with our religion. But they permit you to enjoy your families and your possessions in freedom, and they allow the laws of your religion to remain untouched." The same sentiments Titus himself expressed to the Jews when the city was almost taken (Jos. de Bell. Jud., vi. 34). So that, whether we consult the sacred history, or that of the Jews, it is clearer than the sun, that the Sanhedrim, to which Christ ordered his disciples to tell the matter, had the power of the sword, or of inflicting capital punishments, especially on those of their countrymen who committed any crime against religion. For, in political matters, and in cases of injuries, where the law had determined nothing expressly, I do not question but that the Romans seized the determination of all such cases, or most of them, and usurped the jurisdiction in them to themselves, as we may easily gather from history, and as we may clearly conjecture from the 18th chapter of the Acts.

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LI.

Neither is this contradicted by what we read in Josephus, (Antiq. xx. 7,) that certain Jews said to Albinus it was not lawful for the High Priest, without his permission, to convene the Sanhedrim. For he there narrates historically what certain persons did; he does not express any approval of it. Besides, the High Priest ought not, during an interregnum, to wit, when Festus had died, and Albinus was still on his journey, and before the new Prefect had confirmed him in his authority, to assemble a judicatory for discussing a matter of that importance. For he instigated the putting to death of James, the brother of the Lord, commonly called the Just; which greatly displeased the people generally, because James was universally beloved. He had, also, been but lately appointed High Priest; and his election had not yet been confirmed by the Roman Prefect. Eusebius (Eccles. Hist. ii. 23) shews that he, the High Priest, had most eagerly laid hold of

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the occasion of the interregnum. But what is this to our present purpose? Was Archilaus, styled king (and that by the consent of Cæsar) in his father's testament, therefore not king, because he was unwilling to assume the name and to exercise the functions of royalty, till he had been confirmed by Cæsar? And is the magistrate of any city, which also has a prince, such as we have many in Germany, therefore not a true and legitimate magistrate, because the prince having died, he is compelled to ask from the successor of said prince the confirmation of his privileges? For that the High Priest had authority to convene the judges of the Sanhedrim, after having been confirmed in his office, is clear from this—that the Jews in question do not say to Albinus that that proceeding was absolutely unlawful in the High Priest, but only that he should not so have proceeded without the knowledge of Albinus.

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LII.

It has now been most firmly established, that *tell it to the Church*, means nothing else but, tell it to the magistrate of thy own people, (or who professes the same religion with thee,) before engaging in a litigation with thy brother in a heathen court of law; as Paul most excellently explains in 1 Cor. vi., where, for this very reason, he instructs them to appoint arbiters from among themselves. But who can doubt, that such an expedient would have no place where God grants us a Christian government? Augustin, indeed, in his Book of Faith and Works, c. 2, intimates, distinctly enough, his opinion that excommunication ought to supply the place of the visible sword at that time, when the Church wanted this: as the act of Moses, in punishing transgressors with the sword, and of Phinehas in slaying the adulterers, foreshewed or prefigured, as Augustin writes, the restraining of wicked persons by degradation and excommunication—in those times, namely, when the power

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of the carnal sword in the Church should cease. I remember that certain more recent authors maintain that, on this account, the Jews practised excommunication, (that they did no such thing I have proved by unanswerable reasons and testimonies,) because the power of the sword had been taken from them. If this latter supposition were correct, it would follow as a consequence, that that excommunication could have no place in a Church which has still the power of the sword—as, in like manner, we can now have no need to appoint for ourselves other judges or arbiters, besides the lawfully constituted magistracy. It is therefore beyond all question that the *Church*, in Matthew's Gospel, means nothing less than an ecclesiastical senate possessing the power to debar from the sacraments.

LIII.

Two objections may still be urged against our argument: first, How any one could not hear

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the Church, if this mean a magistracy, possessing the power of the sword? Secondly, How what is said of *binding* and *loosing* can agree with this interpretation?

To the first question an answer has been given already—that the Jews, at that time, had not the power of judging regarding all matters; but almost all cases which did not concern religion fell to be decided by the Roman courts of law. In these matters, therefore, if any one despised the authority of the Sanhedrim, our Lord permits the injured party to prosecute his cause in the heathen courts, the same as if the offender had been a Gentile or a publican. Besides, it is to be noted, that many offences might occur which the law of Moses does not specially punish, or for which it prescribes no specific penalty; on which occasions it might naturally happen, that the guilty person would be dismissed merely with a rebuke. But if he persist in still doing wrong, the injured party may follow out his right, and may call upon the Church or the magistrate to punish him for his misconduct.

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Although this answer also is true, yet the former appears to me more agreeable to the institution of Christ,—to the times, places, and other circumstances.

LIV.

The answer to the other objection is equally easy. For, seeing the manner of speaking, and even almost the very same words, are repeated here, which had been employed by our Lord, (Matt. xvi. 19,) we must conclude that they are intended to convey, if not the very same, yet certainly a very similar, meaning. But to *bind* and to *loose*, in Matt. xvi., signify nothing else but to preach the Gospel, which every one that believes is loosed from his sins, and from death. Wherefore in this passage also, (Matt. xviii. 18,) it can mean nothing else but to entreat our brother to desist from his injustice, and to behave rather in a dutiful manner; since this is pleasing to God, who will punish him if he act contrary to his command. He who thus dis-

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suades his brother from perpetrating wrong, exhibiting to him, at the same time, the will of God and his anger, has, if he succeeds, gained his brother, that is, has loosed him: if he does not succeed, the wrath of God remains on him, in the same way as it remains on him who does not believe the Gospel when he has heard it, and does not remain on him who believes it. But Christ has sought, by that most elegant parable, to persuade us to be disposed and ready to pardon those that repent of the injuries they have done us. From whence his meaning and design in this place may be distinctly perceived.

LV.

It is beyond measure astonishing that people should expound *to bind* and *to loose*, in this passage, as if they meant to *debar from* the sacraments, and *to admit to these*, seeing that, in the whole of the Scriptures, we never find these phrases used to denote any such thing; neither did the Apostles shew, by any expression or

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sign, that they so understood the words of Jesus. A command of our Lord is recorded, (Matt. x. and Luke x.,) to the effect that the Apostles should shake off the dust of their feet, and should depart from those who would not receive them—as also we know they did, Acts xiii. and xviii. But that they should refuse the sacraments to persons who believed their word, and were baptised into Christ, and embraced his religion and doctrine, on the ground that their lives were not conformable to their profession, we do not find to have been anywhere enjoined on the Apostles, or to have been practised by them—as was sufficiently and unanswerably demonstrated before. It may be here sufficient to remind the reader, that no one will ever be able to make out from the Holy Scriptures, that the expression *to bind*, means the same as to exclude professing Christians from partaking of the sacraments; or that *to loose*, means the same as to re-admit to these ordinances persons who had been excluded on account of immorality, and so, as it were, to engraft them again into the Church.

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LVI.

Thus have we solidly and fairly proved that the discourse of Christ in Matt. xviii., does not refer to exclusion from the sacraments, but to the pious dealing with, and settling of private injuries. The same judgment of this passage others have formed also; for example, Augustin in his sermon, 16 De Verb. Domini, sup. Matt.; and that compiler from Chrysostom, Theophylact, who, without doubt, had that opinion, as he had almost all else that he wrote, from Chrysostom. Among more recent theologians, D. Brentius has, in his exposition of this chapter, written a great deal quite agreeing with our views.

LVII.

It is now requisite that we should shew that the transaction recorded (1 Cor. v.) has nothing to do with the excommunication in question.

It is evident, in the first place, that the

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apostle was a strict observer of the law of Moses; and that he did nothing contrary thereto, as he testifies regarding himself (Acts xxv). Yea, it appears from Acts xviii. and xxi., that he even practised certain ceremonies of that law, as the other apostles also did; and therefore he was reproached by the Jews, not because he had taught *the Gentiles* that the observance of the law was unnecessary, but because he had endeavoured to impress this on *the Jews:* whereas all the Jews in Palestine, who had become Christians, nevertheless observed the law of Moses. But who does not know that our Lord had not changed the Mosaic law regarding the celebration of the Passover, so far forth as it required all circumcised persons to keep it? Neither, therefore, did St. Paul debar from the Lord's Supper this incestuous man, nor any other person who wished to be numbered among the Christians. So far as the Jewish Christians were concerned, this is certain, for they would not have suffered such a thing to be practised, contrary to their law and their ancient customs: and who can believe that the Gentile Christians

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would be put in a worse position in this respect than the Jewish?

LVIII.

If *delivering to Satan* were nothing else but a debarring from the sacraments till the person debarred should repent, why should Paul have, with so much anxiety and such careful expressions, excused himself to the Corinthians, and almost have gone the length of begging their pardon, in the latter Epistle, ch. ii. and viii.?

2*dly*, Why should the Corinthians have been seized with such deep sorrow; knowing, as they must have done, that this method of restraining the unrighteous had existed in the Church, and that it ought to continue, and to be enforced? They should rather have rejoiced that an example had been set them, which it behoved them henceforward to follow. If it was nothing but a call to repentance, and a salutary remedy against condemnation, why did they not rejoice instead of being afflicted? Christ declares that the

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angels of God rejoice more over the conversion of one sinner than over ninety-nine righteous persons. From whence it would follow, that the Corinthians were not endowed with the spirit of Jesus, if they felt so much grieved when they saw the apostle do that very thing which alone could recal the erring brother to the way of duty, and save him who was in danger of perishing. Who does not perceive that what the apostle did was something very different from this?

3*dly*, What occasion was there for St. Paul to write, *I do not repent though I did repent* (2 Cor. vii. 8)? or how could he, in any way, repent of having done what he did, if he commanded the same to be observed everywhere, and in all the churches, and if it were nothing but a separation of a person from the sacraments for a certain period, namely, till he repented?

4*thly*, What need was there for the Corinthians to intercede so earnestly with the Apostle on behalf of that unhappy individual, if they knew, that so soon as he repented he would im-

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mediately be received again into their society? Now, that they did earnestly intercede for that person, is evident from these words of the apostle, "To whom ye forgive anything I forgive also: for if I forgave anything to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 10).

5thly, We find him (2 Cor. ii.) excusing himself on this ground, that he wished to put their obedience to the proof; and (chap. viii.) that he desired their earnest affection towards himself to be manifested. How could he have said or written such things, unless what he had commanded was something more than the repelling of that scandalous individual from the sacraments?

6thly, How can it be shewn that these words are reconcilable with that supposition, "Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing," (2 Cor. vii. 9). He says they had suffered no penalty, damage, or detriment from their grief, because by it they had obtained pardon for that unfortunate and unhappy person. If they had not

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done so, they would have sustained damage, that is, they would have lost him. But if he was only to be hindered partaking of the communion till he repented, of what, I should like to know, could they have suffered the loss?

7*thly*, Paul is not there speaking of the Lord's Supper, but of the whole Christian life; and, accordingly, he expresses a wish, not that the offending individual should be excluded from the Lord's Table, but that he should be taken away from the midst of the Corinthians, lest a little leaven should corrupt the whole lump. This agrees with the Apostle's words, and with the similitude of leaven. Excommunication cannot be made to agree with the words either of the apostles or of Moses.

8*thly*, It is to be observed, that St. Paul does not write simply, that *they*, being assembled in the name of the Lord, or according to the command of Christ, should deliver that person to Satan, or prohibit him from joining in the sacraments, but "I," says he, "being absent in body, but present in spirit, have determined, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — when ye

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are gathered together with my spirit, and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ — to deliver this man to Satan," &c. Distinctly shewing, that the power of the Lord Jesus Christ was requisite for this matter, which therefore was something more than a temporary suspension from the communion. Besides, he says, that *he* had determined to do this — although he had resolved not to do it without the Corinthians, probably because he was absent from them — but he does not direct the Church to do this of itself alone, as if this power had belonged to the Church, and not to the Apostle himself:—which circumstances should not be passed over without serious consideration.

Lastly, We nowhere read that the apostle entrusted either to one person or to many, the power, to be used either during his life or after his death, of delivering transgressors to Satan for the destruction of the flesh—inasmuch as he knew that this belonged exclusively to the apostolic authority, and could not with propriety be committed to any other than apostles. For as they had the power of healing diseases, so had

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they also of inflicting them, as appears from Acts, ch. v. and xiii. For this reason, we nowhere read that the apostles ordained any order of ministers to whom the charge of exercising this power was committed. Wherefore the Apostle everywhere writes, that *he* would come with authority; that *he* would be severe and rigid; that *he* would act according to the power committed to him by God, or that *he* would come with a rod; he directs that offenders should be notified *to him* by letter: but he nowhere enjoins *the Presbyters* to exercise these powers; so that it is beyond dispute that these powers belonged exclusively to the apostles, and had not at that time been granted to others. To this refers what we read in 1 Tim. i. of Hymeneus and Alexander, whom, the apostle says, not the Church had delivered, or the elders, or any other parties, but *he himself* had delivered to Satan.

LIX.

From the circumstances of the case, as well as

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by arguments, I have distinctly shewn, that *to deliver unto Satan* was not at all the same as, To debar from the sacraments. I will now further demonstrate the same point yet more clearly from the words themselves, and from the nature of the discourse and the propriety of language.

1*st*, The Apostle does not say, Why have ye not interdicted this flagitious man from approaching the Lord's Supper? but this is what he says, Why have ye not mourned?—that is, Why have ye not, by your lamentations and prayers, besought God that he would, by whatever means, take this man away from the midst of you? This is the interpretation of this passage given by Augustin, Cont. Parmen., Lib. iii. "But exercise grief," says he, "that he may be taken away—that is, that the voice of your sorrow may ascend up to God, and *he* may take this evil work from the midst of you, in the way he knows to be best." Thus, also, he expounds what the same Apostle has said of grieving, 2 Cor. ch. xii. 21. They also agree with Augustin, and with truth, who think the Apostle alludes to the passage (in 1 Kings xxi. 5–14)—

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from which we gather, that it was a custom, observed among the ancient Israelites, to use fasting, prayer, and public lamentation, when enormous crimes were being investigated and punished according to the law. Wherefore, when the Church wanted the power of the sword, St. Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to beseech God that the offending party might be taken from the midst of them; which was a far different thing from excommunicating a person, as we now understand the expression. Further, what writer of any note can be shewn ever to have used the phrase, ἐξαιρεῖν ἐκ μέσου τινων, *to take away from the midst*, to signify the same as To debar from the sacraments? He only is properly said to be taken away from the midst, who is put to death. For although one who is banished may be said to be driven from the midst of those from whom he is separated, yet Greek authors do not generally, or with propriety, use that expression in such cases. Such a use of it, at least, is not met with in the sacred Scriptures. But if the Apostle ordered the person in question to be expelled from the

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society of the faithful, what occasion was there of public mourning? Besides, he would have to be sent away among the heathens. But this supposition is refuted by the words following—*that his spirit may be saved* in the day of the Lord—which, without the bounds of the Church, it could not be. If you say he was only separated from the participation of the sacraments, and from private intercourse, he was, in that case, *not* removed from the midst of them. For no one, I suppose, will ever shew that the Apostle commanded him to be merely debarred from the sacraments and the private intercourse and society of Christians. Wherefore this is tagged to the words of the Apostle, which he can be proved never to have thought of. Indeed, I believe, no person, acquainted with the sacred Scriptures and the more ancient interpreters of them, doubts that this sentence, and therefore these words, were borrowed by St. Paul from the Book of Deuteronomy. But the phrase, as used by Moses, denotes *putting to death*, and nothing else, in the following passages of that Book—Deut. xvii. 7, 12; xix. 19;

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xxi. 21; xxii. 21; xxiv. 7. In all these passages the same words are found; and in ch. xiii. 5, instead of ἐξαιρεῖτε, the verb ἀφανιεῖτε is employed in the same sense and meaning. It is therefore impossible that *to take away from the midst* should, in the passage under review, signify, To excommunicate, as excommunication is now understood.

3dly, The text appears to prove that that unhappy man did not then persist in the crime of which he had been guilty. For the Apostle says, "He that *did* this deed, ποιησας" — and "Him that *hath* so done this, κατεργασαμενον" — which expressions prove that he had done it, but do not imply that he was doing it still. So, then, he seems to have intended inflicting the penalty on that person on account of the wickedness past, as God commanded to be done, and as a good magistrate is wont to do. Indeed, when he writes, *that his spirit may be saved*, he seems to have known that the man had repented of his crime. For how could he have written this concerning a person, of whose feelings, in regard to such a sin, he was not yet aware?

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4thly, The apostle says that he had determined to deliver, παραδουναι, such an one to Satan for the destruction, εις ολεθρον, of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Is it not yet known what the verb παραδιδωμι means? Whoever found, either in a profane author or in the sacred Scriptures, this verb used, as it here is, where it did not signify to yield, or permit, or give up? The person that gives up is put first; there follows the person to whom it is given up; and what is given up is also a person: lastly, we are also told *why* and *for what end* it is given up. The phraseology is of the same kind as if I should say that I deliver my son to a schoolmaster, either for instruction or for chastisement. Who could doubt that a person so expressing himself, yielded up his son into the hands of the schoolmaster, that he might either instruct him or chastise him? They who wish to see instances may look at 1 Tim. i. 20; Acts xxvii. 1; xxviii. 17; Matt. v. 25; xviii. 34; xxvii. 2; Mark xiii. 9; John xix. 11. Very similar is the phrase in St. Matthew xxiv. 9, They shall deliver you to be afflicted,

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παραδωσουσιν ὑμας εις θλιψιν, and that in Mark xiii. 12, "the brother shall deliver up, παραδωσει, the brother to death."* Also St. Peter, (2 Epis. ii. 4,) speaking of the evil angels, says "he delivered, παρεδωκεν, them to be kept for judgment."

In the second chaper of the Book of Job, God addresses Satan in these words, Behold! I deliver him to thee, only save his life.

Do not these passages shew that the persons spoken of were delivered to be afflicted, killed, condemned? To express the matter in one word, no one will ever be able to shew that such a phrase is used as an equivalent for exclusion from the sacraments, unless *the destruction of the flesh*, and *the prohibition of the sacraments* are the same things.

5thly, It is impossible to make out that the noun ολεθρος is ever used in the New Testament

* It is not unworthy of remark, that our translators often render the verb παραδιδωμι, which means to *deliver up*, by the word *betray*, which is the proper rendering of the verb προδιδωμι, as in Mark xiii. 12. The argument of Erastus has reference to the former word, which is applied to acts of delivering up, without implying necessarily any censure, whereas προδιδωμι conveys a condemnation of the act. — T.

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to denote the extinction of the lusts of the flesh. For, wherever it occurs, it is employed to signify *the death* either of the soul or of the body; whether *of the flesh* be added or not. I might even say that there is no Greek author extant who uses the word in the sense in which, as I have observed, some expound it in this place, but we are concerned at present only with the sacred writings. The apostle uses that word, 1 Thess. v. 3, and 2 Thess. i. 9, and again, 1 Tim. vi. 9. The verbal noun, as I may call it, ολοθρευτης, occurs, 1 Cor. x. 10, and the participle, ολοθρευων, in Heb. xi. 28; as does also the compound, εξολοθρευθησεται, taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, in Acts iii. 23; and everywhere these words all of them apply to destruction or death. Εξολοθρευω often occurs in the Septuagint version, and almost in every instance Pagninus renders it by a word signifying *to cut off*. This is certain, that the sacred writers everywhere use these words when they speak of death.

I am aware that Paul applies the verb θαναтοω, Rom. viii. 13, and νεκροω, Col. iii. 5, and also σταυρoω, Gal. v. 24 and vi. 14, to the slaying of

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the lusts of the flesh. But ολεθρος or ολοθρευω, is never found applied in this way, either in profane or in the sacred writers. Yea, I do not remember that I ever met with the noun θανατος employed in this figurative way in the New Testament. It is therefore childish to allege, as is done, that Paul is here setting the lusts of the flesh in opposition to the spirit, when, in truth, he is opposing *the death* of the flesh or body, to the salvation of the soul or spirit: as the natural signification of the words, the intention of the apostle, the connection of the discourse, the circumstances, and the use of the verb παραδοῦναι, prove in such a manner, that they who love truth can desire no further evidence.

6*thly*, The same conclusion is forced upon us by the words, *That his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;* that is, the day of judgment. This expression clearly shews that the apostle is speaking of that guilty person as of one ready to die.

7*thly and lastly*, The use of the noun η επιτιμια, 2 Cor. ii. 6, indicates that that individual

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had not been cut off from the sacraments, because, in its proper signification, that noun denotes *rebuke, reproof, threatening, reproach,* (as indeed the translators render it,) but not *penalty* or *punishment.* Two reasons to the same purpose may be added. The first is, that nowhere in the Scriptures is exclusion from the sacraments spoken of as a penalty. The second is, that the words themselves shew with sufficient clearness that a reproof is what is intended, and which the man in question had undergone, and that not from any one person, but from a great many. For, in his 2d Epis. to the Cor. ii. 6, Paul writes, *ικανον τω τοιουτω ἡ επιτιμια,* &c., *sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many.* The apostle absolves him only from the commination which had proceeded from the Church, or from *many;* to wit, that he should be delivered to the Devil to be tormented. This, then, was all he had as yet endured. For Paul does not absolve him in part merely, but entirely. When, therefore, he says that that reproof and commination were sufficient, he intimates, at the same time, that

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the guilty individual had endured nothing more. The verb επιτιμᾶν is found Matt. xvi. 22; xvii. 3; xix. 13; xx. 31, and also in the other Evangelists; and in the writings of the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 2, we have ελεγξον, επιτιμησον, παρακαλεσον. In all which passages it uniformly denotes reproof, but never punishment.

LX.

But here it may be asked, how, if this person suffered only the επιτιμια or reproof, he could be said to have been delivered to Satan to be tormented or killed? Some of the ancients say that he had been actually so delivered to Satan to be by him tormented, either by disease or in some other way, and gradually, by these means, destroyed; but that he was liberated from this infliction by the apostle, before matters had gone to extremity. If this reply is well-founded, the word επιτιμια might denote penalty. But though I do not deny there may be something in this answer, I will yet furnish another which agrees

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better with the words of the apostle. St. Paul had resolved, not by himself alone, to deliver this man to Satan, but he was resolved that this should be done by the whole Church, assembled for this purpose. Now, when the Church saw that that miserable person was plunged into such grief as to be all but swallowed up of it, they deferred the business until they could ascertain the mind of the apostle, and might be able to obtain from him forgiveness for the offender. In the meantime, they threatened the culprit, that if they did not succeed with the apostle, they would do their duty. So that unhappy man was many months afflicted, till intelligence was received that Paul had forgiven him. We may distinctly enough gather from the 2d Epistle that things proceeded in some such way as this.

LXI.

From all that has been already said, and from other considerations that might be adduced,

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we have so clearly and unquestionably demonstrated that this delivering to Satan was a quite different thing from expulsion from the sacraments, or excommunication, as they nowadays call it, that it can be denied by no person who is a lover of truth, and comprehends what has been advanced. Some of the ancient fathers, as I said a little ago, expounded this passage in the same way — among the rest Augustin, whose testimony was quoted above. There is extant another passage to the same purpose by this Father (De Verbis Domin. in Monte, Lib. i.); Athanasius, before him, so understood the place; and after him Chrysostom; and, lastly, Theophylact his compiler.

LXII.

We may now notice, though briefly, other passages which are alleged in their defence, by them who differ with us in opinion. They persuade themselves their cause derives great support from that sentence in St. Paul's Epistle

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to Timothy, (1 Tim. v. 17,) in which he says, that *elders who labour in word and doctrine are worthy of double honour* compared with others. For they fancy it is proved by this passage, that there were some elders who were *not* employed in teaching; and to these they assign that other occupation, of censuring morals, watching sinners, admonishing the obstinate, of giving information to their fellow-presbyters,—that is, to the Church,—and, together with them, excommunicating those who would not hear the Church.

LXIII.

We, however, consider that, from the writings of the Apostles Peter and Paul, it is clear that minister, bishop, and elder, (when this last word denotes an office or duty, and not age,) were all the same in the apostolic times. So that there was then no elder who did not teach as well as rule, unless any one would include among elders the persons who were constituted

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arbiters and judges in law-suits and quarrels (1 Cor. vi). But our business is not with these at present, seeing their duty was of a very different kind. The opinion, expressed above regarding elders, and which is evidently the correct one, is confirmed by Jerome, in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus; and by Ambrose, except that he holds that the first in the order of the elders was styled "Bishop." So that the purport of Paul's expression is as if one should say, "I love all ministers and pastors, but especially those who feed the sheep entrusted to them with unwearied diligence and most anxious care:" or, "I love all studious men, especially those who study day and night." Saying this, I do not mean that there are some pastors who do not feed, or some studious men who do not study, but I merely affirm that some are more sedulous and more diligent in their pursuit than others.

That this is the true interpretation of the Apostle's meaning, and of his words, is proved, in the first place, by what is said immediately after, about *honour, i. e., remuneration* or *reward.*

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For it is not supposable that, at that time, the same remuneration had been assigned in the Church to ministers, and to elders who did not teach. For the former would have discharged a double duty, the latter a single. And yet, notwithstanding, the Apostle says that both are worthy of double honour or remuneration. Further, the Apostle introduces (v. 18) the quotation about the ox that treadeth out the corn, which he elsewhere (1 Cor. ix.) adduces for the purpose of shewing that maintenance is due (not to unpreaching elders, but) to ministers of the Word. And,

Lastly, This interpretation is supported by the participle here employed, κοπιῶντες. For the verb κοπιαω, or κοπιαζω, does not signify simply *I work*, but, I fatigue or exhaust myself by working — or I do anything with great earnestness, care, and labour. Hence the Greek noun κοπος answers to the Latin *lassitudo*, fatigue. And as there is a difference of sense among the nouns εργον, κοπος, πονος, so there is among the verbs εργαζεσθαι, κοπιᾶν, or κοπιαζειν, and πονειν. This verb, κοπιαω, occurs frequently

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in the New Testament, and it always expresses sedulous diligence and exhaustion. Thus, Matt. xi. 28, Come unto me all ye that labour, οἱ κοπιῶντες; Luke v. 5, Master, we have toiled all the night, κοπιασαντες, and have caught nothing; John iv. 6, Jesus being weary with his journey, κεκοπιακως, sat on the well; We *labour*, working with our own hands, κοπιωμεν, 1 Cor. iv. 12; Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him *labour*, κοπιατω, working, &c., Eph. iv. 28; And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that *labour* among you, ειδεναι τους κοπιωντας εν υμιν, και προισταμενους, 1 Thess. v. 12. This last passage admirably and distinctly fixes the meaning of that other place (1 Tim. v. 17) which we are now considering. The word occurs in several other passages of the New Testament, such as 1 Tim. iv. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 10, and elsewhere.

LXIV.

Another objection to our doctrine is drawn

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from the words of our Lord, in which he bids us not cast our pearls before swine, and not give that which is holy unto the dogs, Matt. vii. 6.

To this objection I answer, that our Lord is there speaking of those who despise the pearls, and trample them under their feet, and turn and rend us; in other words, of the enemies of the Gospel—regarding whom we are not at all discoursing at present:—inasmuch as we are speaking of no others than Christians, properly instructed in Christianity, and approving it, and who are desirous to participate in the same sacraments as other Christians, though their lives may not have been consistent with that profession.

Further, we may reply to that objection, that our Saviour is not discoursing here of the *sacraments*, but of the *doctrine* of the Gospel, which, he says, should not be propounded to dogs and swine, that is, to persons unwilling to receive it, or who spurn it. In the same way we may not improperly explain the parable, Matt. xiii. 45, where Jesus compares the king-

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dom of heaven to a man seeking goodly pearls. So that that passage (Matt. vii. 6) has nothing to do with the present argument.

LXV.

Our opponents allege next, that Paul enjoins Timothy thus: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear," 1 Tim. v. 20. We dont deny that he says so—but we deny that this saying has anything to do with excommunication. For, to omit many things which might be adduced, I shall only make this one observation, that no man will ever succeed in shewing, that to reprove or rebuke a person under the eye, or in presence of the Church, is the same thing as to debar him from the sacraments. But if you cannot demonstrate that these two are the same, your objection is worth nothing. Who will prove to us that the apostle had here any thought in his mind of denying people the sacraments? He is not even here treating of sins publicly or openly committed: "but, them that

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sin," he says, that is, them that persevere in sin, "*rebuke before all*, that both the sinner himself, and others also as well as he, may fear and shun transgression." No distinction is here introduced between more trifling and grosser offences, much less between those that are secret, and those that are public — whether partially or absolutely. The objection, in short, is worse than a leaden one, and like wax, melts at the fire of truth, and vanishes into smoke. Nay, the words of Paul in this place refute the doctrine of excommunication: for when Christians sin, he appoints that they shall be *rebuked before the rest:* he does not appoint that they shall be *excommunicated.* The reason the Apostle subjoins is this — "*That others may fear*" — meaning that if the sinner himself would not repent, others at least might by this means be made better. The words — *them that sin*, do not, in this place, denote persons who have now left off the practice of iniquity, but those who persist in it, and who, after being admonished, are still impenitent. These sinners, I say, he orders to be rebuked and reproved before the other Christians: he does

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not appoint that they shall be excommuncated.

LXVI.

Another objection they make is this: "The Apostle," say they, "requires us to shun the wicked, so far as not even to partake of a common meal with them. Much less, then," they infer, "could it be his intention that we should unite with those same parties in the celebration of the Lord's Supper." But this inference I deny: for there is the greatest difference possible between the prohibition of private familiarity with individuals, and the exclusion of them from the sacraments; and it does not by any means follow, that because the former is forbidden, therefore the latter is. The one, indeed, is a civil penalty, the other a religious. The one we are commanded to inflict, the other we are not. St. Paul explains to us the end and reason of the one punishment being imposed; we find nothing said of any end or reason for the other. Nay, we do not find any such thing

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as excommunication ever required, or ever so much as mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. And that the one punishment might be inflicted, and actually was so, without the other, is proved by what the Pharisees did. For these persons, as they affected to appear holier than others, so they had no intercourse in common life with publicans. Whether others besides the Pharisees followed the same practice, I do not at present remember to have read. But no man will ever be able to shew that those same publicans were excluded from the sacrifices, the temple, the Passover, and the other sacraments, provided they had been circumcised, and had not apostatised from Judaism. And even at the present day, in many places, certain worthless persons are shunned in common society, whom yet nobody thinks of excluding from the communion. And this also proves what was said before, that avoiding men's society in common life is rather a civil than an ecclesiastical penalty, and cannot be held to be that *delivering unto Satan* which our opponents hold excommunication to be.

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The Apostle requires the good to shun the company of the wicked, that these may be ashamed and repent. He does not forbid the wicked to frequent the company of the good, if any of them are willing to admit them to their acquaintance. In private society people converse about all sorts of things; and not only is the person who has committed sin not reformed, if he suppose himself equally esteemed by his neighbours after his transgression as he was before, but others are very apt to be corrupted by this example. Whereas, if he perceive that people avoid him, he cannot help thinking of the cause of this; and, to prevent himself being odious to those who before loved him, he may be induced to take heed, and begin a better life. Wherefore, as their being cut off from private intercourse with their fellow-Christians tends to deter men from their vices and unholy living, so the admission of them that are unholy to the familiarity of common life, tends to an opposite result.

The case is totally different as regards admitting people to the sacraments, or repelling

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them; for a frequent participation of these by no means nourishes and strengthens men's sins, in the same way as private familiarity with them does. For in the churches wherein those ordinances are dispensed, people, instead of talking of private or trifling matters, have the Word of the Lord preached to them. There they hear that Christ died for their sins, and that he requires we should publicly render him thanks for that mercy; and that that man is not a worthy guest who has not diligently examined himself; but that all eat judgment to themselves who, being unworthy, thrust themselves in among the guests. And, hearing such doctrine, they who propose to approach the Lord's Table, whatever they may have been before, are compelled to consider what kind of action this is; what God requires of them; and how they may henceforth order their life so as to please him. If men are deprived of this invitation, they will never grow better, but always worse; and that seems to be the reason why God instituted and enjoined so many sacrifices, ceremonies, and oblations. Indeed, the Apostle nowhere ordains

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that those individuals, with whom good men should not live on terms of intimacy, should be kept back from the sacraments. And elsewhere, where he requires that persons of that description should be intimated to him by letter, he does not enjoin on the elders the duty of excommunicating them, or debarring them from the sacraments. All these considerations prove most distinctly, that they are totally in error who suppose that the Apostle here either approves or points at excommunication.

LXVII.

"But," they object further, "it is not becoming that the Church should be polluted by admitting the wicked to the communion;" wherefore there is a necessity, they think, of honestly separating the bad from the good.

This is my answer: The bad cannot pollute the good by joining in the ordinances which God has instituted, so long as they do not imitate the bad in temper and life: for neither

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the prophets of old, nor the holy kings and judges, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, nor his disciples after him, were any of them polluted, when they met in the same temple, assisted at the same sacrifices, partook of the same sacraments, with men of most abandoned character. Jesus Christ was not defiled by that generation of vipers which received the same baptism as he did from the hands of John the Baptist; neither was the Lord himself, or his Apostles, or the Last Supper, polluted by the presence of Judas, though he was a thief, and then meditated his treachery against his Master, and had received money for that purpose. The Apostle Paul, speaking of celebrating the communion, does not appoint that we should examine one another, and ascertain whether some one may not be there who might defile us; but this is his command, Let every man examine, not others, but himself.

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LXVIII.

Thus far I have effectually and unquestionably proved that, before the time of Christ, no circumcised person was kept back, on account of the sinfulness of his life, from those ceremonies and sacraments which God instituted by Moses; and it has also been shewn, that it was not even lawful for any one to be so. It was next demonstrated, by reasons and clear testimonies drawn from holy Scripture, that neither Christ nor his Apostles either taught or practised any such thing. Besides this, I have also shewn, that what they who differ from me allege in their own defence, is not sufficient to justify their opinion: so that I now see no further reason to hinder me arriving at the correct and true conclusion, that this excommunication, by which Christians are debarred solely on account of unholiness of life from the sacraments, is not an ordinance of God, but an invention and a device of men; and, so far from having any foundation

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in the sacred Scriptures, these can be shewn rather to prohibit it.

LXIX.

Do you then condemn, some may ask, so many holy bishops, who began, presently after the Apostles' times, to excommunicate notorious sinners? I answer, It is one thing to impugn an opinion, another to condemn the man that holds it. In our own days, a great many men, learned and godly, have examined and refuted the Catholic errors, as I may call them, of the ancients—such as the limbus of the Fathers; the fire of purgatory; intercession of the saints; exorcism in baptism; celibacy of the clergy; unction in baptism, and at death; prayers for the dead; and, connected with the present question, satisfactions; but I do not remember it has been advanced as a charge against any of these men, that they condemned the ancients. If these ancients wished that this excommunication should be obtruded upon the Church,

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as an institution of God's appointment, I praise them not; but, in the meantime, I do very much approve and commend their intention and their zeal. For their anxiety was (when no other more convenient method occurred to them) to bridle, by this means, the licentiousness of the wicked. For the most of them did—as we see people do generally at the present day—they followed the custom which was public and common, without it ever coming into their mind to inquire whether the custom was agreeable to Scripture or not.

LXX.

Concerning the origin of this excommunication I am not able at present to produce anything certain, except that a little before the year 200 of our era, I find some such thing to have been first done or attempted. I cannot discover that during the first 150 years, any individual was hindered from partaking of the sacraments on the ground that he led an unholy

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life. They who are versed in the writings of the Fathers, and in history, will perhaps be able to adduce something more definite. If any one will read attentively what Socrates has recorded in the 5th Book, ch. 19, of his History, I think he will not feel very reluctant to admit that this custom of excommunicating people was first introduced into the Church about the times of Novatus. Sozomen, however, (Book vii., ch. 6,) mentions another reason why it was instituted. But we also read that the Roman bishop, Victor, about the year 200, forbade them who would not forgive injuries to partake of the communion. I have remarked that, before this time, the communion was refused only to heretics, and persons who had no profession of religion. But, however that may be, this at least is sufficiently evident, that the design with which excommunication was introduced into the Church was, that it might serve in it as some restraint on wickedness, and as a punishment. Afterwards, when the Church had now obtained the power of the sword, in other words, when the civil rulers had become Christian, that same

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power remained, nevertheless, in the hands of the bishops; partly because it was believed to be a divine ordinance, and partly because they felt it hard to lay down this spiritual sword, which rendered them formidable to the greatest princes. For they easily persuaded others, as they too easily and willingly themselves believed, that this practice had the authority of Jesus Christ. Superstition, by ascribing salvation to the sacraments, strengthened that notion; for it was recorded and believed that some persons could not die before they had partaken of the Eucharist. Wherefore it was either through this error that people dreaded excommunication exceedingly, or the error itself sprung from the practice of excommunication: for the more ignorant sort readily believed that life consisted in their enjoying the sacraments, and that it was death to be deprived of them, when they saw transgressors visited with refusal of the sacraments as an extreme and final punishment.

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LXXI.

But the administrators of this, so far as conjecture may reach, seem to have been those elders of whom we read, 1 Cor. vi., (and who discharged the functions of magistrates in the Church,) and the ministers. Afterwards the whole power in this matter rested with the bishops, who took cognizance of all causes, settled disputes, pronounced judgment, and administered all affairs of that sort; as we find from Augustin, (who complains of these labours,) and from the history of that time. Ambrose, at least, affirms that those elders (without whom nothing was wont to be done in the churches) then had place, while yet they wanted bishops. But from St. Paul's statement, it is plain that those elders should have continued to preside over that business so long, at least, as the Church continued under a heathen government. From whence we may draw this other conclusion, that as their duty ceased so soon as the government became Christian, so, in this case,

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excommunication ought also to cease, even allowing that they had exercised it previously. It ought to be noted, in the meantime, that these elders held the place of magistrates, and managed civil matters, and were not an ecclesiastical court, as we now oppose ecclesiastical to civil. For it is plainly said (by the apostle) that they ought to settle disputes connected with the common affairs and business of life.

LXXII.

The effects which the practice of excommunication produced in the Church would require many volumes to detail, and cannot be unfolded in a few words. This was the first effect—People began to ascribe salvation to the sacraments. For thus they reasoned: He who is cut off from the sacraments is in a state of destruction; therefore, he that partakes of them is in a state of salvation. They could not doubt regarding the premises, while they were accustomed to hear that they to whom the

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sacraments were refused, thus endured the severest of punishments, and so were, as they thought, delivered unto Satan. Hence, it was believed, (as I said a little ago,) that some could not die without partaking of the Eucharist. The error was increased by those great and manifold and long continued satisfactions and ceremonies which were introduced. This also principally contributed to the same end, that they allowed the Lord's Supper to be administered to persons in the very article of death, — to prevent them going hence without the necessary food of their souls. And if this was omitted, the individual whom the calamity befel was reckoned to be lost: as if God did not grant pardon of their sins and eternal life to them that heartily repent, unless those elders should happen to consider them worthy of being admitted to the Lord's Supper. What error can be conceived more horrible than this?

This was another fruit of the same tree — that almost every one thought men had the power of opening and shutting heaven to whomsoever they would. Thus, the Emperor Theo-

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dosius the Younger, would not dine because he had refused the request of a monk who presented some petition to him, and who took revenge by excommunicating him. And, although the Bishop of Constantinople told him, that such an excommunication as that was of no force, yet he would not rest till the same monk loosed him who had bound him. So also, Theodosius the Elder was compelled by Ambrose to absent himself during eight months from attending church and hearing sermons. He had sinned, indeed, but much less heinously than Ambrose himself had done — as the judicious reader may conclude from what is said on the subject in the history of Nicephorus, and in Philip Melancthon's Chronicle.

In short, by this means it came to pass that the Roman Pontiff subjected to his own power the whole of the West, and compelled princes, kings, and emperors to obey his pleasure. And through his excommunicating certain emperors and kings, some hundreds of thousands of men have been killed in the German empire. Religion, moreover, was changed

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and corrupted by him according to his own will; while, for fear of this thunderbolt of his, none durst open their mouths against his appointments and laws. And, indeed, if we will rightly weigh the matter, we shall find that *god of Forces*, spoken of in Daniel, meant nothing else but excommunication, or the debarring of Christians from the ordinances of religion, but especially from the Lord's Supper. For this excommunication was truly the god, and is even at this day the god of Forces by which the Roman Pontiff subjects all things to himself: and others now, by similar means, are seeking to bring the dominions of whomsoever they please, under their power. But I hope it will be discovered that this is a false god; and, in that case, he will hurt the Church the less. Finally, things came to that pass, that almost all believed that they whom the Pope had pronounced unworthy of eternal life, were cut off from the divine mercy; and, on the other hand, whomsoever he wished should be saved, they were certainly saved accordingly. Do we expect that the clergy of our own times will prove

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better or more moderate in their use of such a power than they were of old? They who think so, deceive themselves, and have neither well examined the Scriptures, nor learned much from experience.

LXXIII.

I see no reason why the Christian magistrate at the present day should not possess the same power, which God commanded the magistrate to exercise in the Jewish commonwealth. Do we imagine that we are able to contrive a better constitution of Church and State than that? We read in the 4th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy that, on account of the statutes and judgments which the Lord gave to them, all nations would admire and praise the Jews as a wise and understanding people. But they had no such excommunication as that now in debate: and the power to coerce the impure and criminal lay with the magistrate, to whom it pertained not only to punish, according to the

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law of God, such characters as these, but even to order the whole external part of religion. For this latter duty was committed, by the command of God, not to Aaron, but to Moses. The same power, as we know, was afterwards transferred to Joshua, not to Eleazer: God commands, not Eleazer but Joshua, to see that the children of Israel the second time were circumcised; nor does he require him to make any exceptions in regard to this ordinance, though, at that time, there were very many of the Hebrews very immoral. Immediately after they had crossed the Jordan, he commanded them to celebrate the Passover, but we do not read that he excluded any of the people on the ground of their ungodliness or immorality. At the command of the same Joshua, the Ark was carried, and those things which pertain to religion were performed, as is clear from the whole Book of Joshua. Samuel and Eli discharged both functions; as priests they offered sacrifice, as judges they administered the affairs of the state, as well as those of religion. And, indeed, it was lawful for the High Priests, under the Old Testament,

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to govern also the state, because they bore the type of Jesus Christ, who is at once King and Priest. But our clergy have been directed not to do so. See 1 Pet. v. 3, which relates to this matter.

LXXIV.

When we come to the history of the Kings, the same thing is equally manifest. In the case of David, this is undoubted; for we find that he arranged all the ministries and services of religion. Let any who choose read from the twenty-second to the twenty-seventh chapter of the First Book of Chronicles. Further, the temple was first built, and then consecrated, not by a priest, but by Solomon the king. The same is the purport of that remarkable history of Jehoshaphat, recorded in 2 Chron. xix., which, if considered attentively, strikingly illustrates the present question, as does also the history of the holy king Hezekiah, and, indeed, the whole of the Old Testament.

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Wherefore, if that Church and State were most wisely founded, arranged, and appointed, any other must merit approbation which approaches to its form as nearly as present times and circumstances will permit. So that wherever the magistrate is godly and Christian, there is no need of any other authority, under any other pretension or title, to rule or punish the people —as if the Christian magistrate differed nothing from the heathen. "Of all errors in truth," says Wolfgang Musculus, in his "Common Places" "De Magistratu," from which book the words immediately preceding are quoted; "of all errors in truth, the most hurtful is this, which a great many people entertain, that the Christian magistrate is to be viewed in the same light in which we regard a heathen government, whose authority is to be recognised only in respect of secular matters." If, then, the Christian magistrate possesses not only authority to settle religion according to the directions given in holy Scripture, and to arrange the ministries and offices thereof—for which reason Moses requires him who should be elected king

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to transcribe with his own hand the Book of the Law, or writings of Moses, and to exercise himself in the study of these continually—but also, in like manner, to punish crimes; in vain do some among us now meditate the setting up a new kind of tribunal, which would bring down the magistrate himself to the rank of a subject of other men. I allow, indeed, the magistrate ought to consult, where *doctrine* is concerned, those who have particularly studied it; but that there should be any such ecclesiastical tribunal to take cognisance of men's conduct, we find no such thing anywhere appointed in the holy Scriptures.

LXXV.

But in those churches, the members of which live under an ungodly government, (for example, Popish or Mohammedan,) grave and pious men should be chosen, according to the precept of the Apostle, to settle disputes by arbitration, compose quarrels, and do other

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offices of that sort. These men ought also, in conjunction with the ministers, to admonish and reprove them who live unholy and impure lives; and if they do not succeed, they may also punish, or rather recall them to virtue, either by refusing to hold private intercourse with them, or by a public rebuke, or by any other such mark of disapprobation. But from the sacraments which God has instituted, they may not debar any who desire to partake. For who but God is the judge of men's hearts? It may happen that some spark may be kindled by the public preaching, which it may be not at all useless, but rather most beneficial, to cherish by every means not inconsistent with piety. And tell me, I pray, how it can be otherwise than absurd, and therefore impious, to debar from a solemn thanksgiving and commemoration of the death of the Lord, a person who declares that he feels his heart prompts him so to do?—that he desires with the Church to celebrate that death, and to be a member of the Church, and, finally, that he wishes to testify that he disapproves his past life?

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APPENDIX.

It may not be amiss, if, as an appendix, or corollary, I add the decree made on this subject, by all the lay orders of the empire, at the Diet of Nuremberg, in the year 1523, and which was presented to the Pope. For thus it will be shewn, that about 46 years ago, theologians had begun to enter into this dispute, and that I am not the first by whom it has been agitated. Indeed, I do not think there is any one, even moderately versed in the history of Germany, who supposes or believes that any of those decrees were made or presented to the Pope without the privity of the Divines. But, to make the matter clearer, I have thought proper to compare the German copy, written at the Diet itself, with the Latin translation which was sent to the Pope, and which Matt. Flacius Illyricus caused to be printed a second time at Basil in the year 1565, with his book "Of the Sects and Dissentions of the Papists;" and, from a comparison of the two, to set forth the decree entire. In the list, then, of those Hundred Grie-

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vances, which had been drawn up two years before at Worms, but were more distinctly expressed at Nuremberg, the thirty-fourth runs thus:—

"Also many Christians, at Rome and elsewhere, are excommunicated by archbishops, bishops, and the ecclesiastical judges appointed by them, on account of secular matters and temporal goods; whereby many weak consciences are distressed, and driven to despair. So, because of pecuniary affairs, and things of a passing nature, and very often for exceedingly trifling causes, some, besides incurring the loss of honour and goods, and contrary to right and the commands of God, are brought into peril of ruin both of soul and body: whereas no one ought to be excommunicated, or to be held an excommunicated person, according to the testimony of holy Scripture, unless he has been convicted of heresy. Wherefore the laic orders of the holy Roman empire beseech his Holiness to abolish totally, as becomes the ghostly and spiritual Father, this burden of excommunication at Rome, and in the Roman Curia, and that he will take order that, in all other places also, archbishops, bishops, and their delegates, be deprived of this power; and, finally, that he would appoint that no person shall be excommunicated, or held to be so, for any other cause than his being convicted of the manifest crime of heresy in regard to religion: for no one, on any other ground at all,—such as temporal goods, and

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the like,—should be removed and separated from God and his Church, but for heresy and infidelity alone."

To the same purpose is the fact, which John Stumpsius records in his Helvetian Chronicle, (Book ii., De German, c. 29,) that about the year 1245, when Henry, Landgrave of Turingia, and, after his death, William, Count of Holland, had, by the instigation of the Pope, been elected, in opposition to the Emperor Frederick II. and his son Conrad; the priests throughout Suevia persisted in teaching this, among other doctrines, that *no man under the sun had any authority conferred on him to prohibit Christians from joining in spiritual offices, and in the worship of God.* For this reason, as that author relates, they went on celebrating mass, although the Pope had laid his interdict on them, and had pronounced them excommunicated.

THE END.

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SPEECH OF B. WHITELOCKE IN THE LONG PARLIAMENT, IN THE YEAR 1645, REGARDING THE POWER OF EXCOMMUNICATION SOUGHT FOR THE PRESBYTERIES THEN PROPOSED TO BE ERECTED IN ENGLAND.*

Mr Speaker,—The Assembly of Divines have petitioned and advised the House of Commons, that in every Presbytery or Presbyterian congregation, the pastors and ruling elders may have the power of excommunication, and the power of suspending such as they shall judge ignorant or scandalous persons from the sacrament. By pastors, I suppose they mean themselves, and others who are or may be preachers in the several congregations, and would be Επισκοποι, bishops, or overseers of those congregations. By ruling elders, I take their meaning to be a select number of such as in every one of those congregations shall be chosen for the execution of the church government and discipline in them respectively. They may properly enough

* Whitelocke, pp. 163, 164.

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be called pastors, from our Saviour's charge to his disciples, *Pasce oves meas*—Feed my sheep; so that a pastor is to feed those committed to his charge with spiritual food, as the shepherd feeds his flock with temporal. If so, how improper, then, will it be for those who are to feed the flock, to desire the power to excommunicate any, to keep them from food, to suspend any from the sacrament, to drive them from feeding on the bread of life, to forbid any to eat of that whereof Christ, the great Shepherd of our souls, hath said, "Take, eat," &c. To forbid those to drink whom they shall judge unworthy, when our Saviour himself said, "Drink ye all of this;" and St. Mark, chap. xiv., saith, "And they all drank of the cup." In the Old Testament, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy milk and wine without money and without price," said the prophet Isaiah; yet now his successors would be authorised to say to some persons, You do not thirst, though themselves say they do, and to deny them milk and water, bread and wine, when they desire it. Surely it is not proper for pastors, for feeders of flocks, to deny food to any of their flock who shall desire it. But some have said, that it is the part of a good shepherd, if he see one of his sheep going astray into a ground where the grass will bring the rot, to chase him out of that pasture: and they apply it to

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spiritual pastors, suspending those from the sacrament whom they fear, by the unworthy receiving of it, may eat and drink their own damnation. This may be a charitable simile, but will hardly be found a full answer; for it is not the receiving of the sacrament, but the unworthiness of the receiver, that brings destruction. And whether he be unworthy or not, it is not in the judgment of pastor, or of any other, but of the party only who is the sinner; for none can know his heart but himself, and a commission will scarce be produced for any other to be judge thereof. The person refused may say to the pastor in this case, *Quis constituit te judicem?* Besides, the authority desired is not only of suspension, but of excommunication, which is a total driving or thundering away of the party from all spiritual food whatsoever. And if a shepherd shall chase away his sheep from all pastures, that indeed will bring the hunger-rot upon them. The more sinful persons are, the more they have need of instruction; and where can they have it better than from the lips of the learned and pious pastors, who ought to preserve knowledge. But it hath been said, that the ruling elders are to join with them: let us inquire who they are. In some congregations, in country villages, perhaps they may not be very learned themselves, yet the authority to be given them is sufficiently great. The word *elders*, amongst the Hebrews, signified the men of

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greatest power and dignity. The members of their great Sanhedrim were styled elders, so were the princes of their tribes. The Grecians had the appellation in like esteem, πρεσβύτεροι, which we translate *elders*, was given to their greatest men, and from thence is fetched the name of Presbyters or priests, Presbytery and Presbyterian government. The Phœnicians, Tyrians, and other particular nations used the word elder in the like sense, and styled their generals and princes by the name of elders. The Romans did the like, their senate and their senators came all from *senes*, elders, and from them to this day the French, Spaniards, and Italians retain the titles of seigneur, seigniori, seniori, and the like, for the greatest men. And in England we give the name of earls to our great lords, from elder, and to the king himself, the title of sir, abstracted from seigneur, an elder. In towns they still keep the title of aldermen, that is elder-men, for the chief and rulers of the corporation. And so they may allow the title of elders to the chief and select men of every Presbytery. Yet, if this power, excommunication and suspension, be allowed them, they may well challenge the title of elders in the highest signification. The power of the keys is a great power; the Romish Church will acknowledge it, and the foundation of their supremacy to be built upon it. Whomsoever they bind or loose on earth to be bound or loosed in heaven, is

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a power which may claim the highest title imaginable. Although I can never presume that the reverend and pious learned gentlemen, who aim at this power, can have the least supposition of any such effect by it; yet if any petitioners should sue to you to be made judges or justices, I believe you would judge their petition the less modest, and them the less fit for such offices; but to this I make no application, and I hope none shall make any use of it. Power is thought fit to be given to suspend from the sacrament two sorts of persons, the ignorant and the scandalous. I am sure that I am a very ignorant person, and I fear we are all more ignorant than we ought to be of the truth of Christ, and some more than others. And the most learned, I doubt, may be called in the large sense ignorant. Even amongst the pastors, and perhaps amongst the ruling elders, in some places the most learned may, in other places be adjudged ignorant. The more ignorant people are, the more some will blame their pastors who ought to instruct them, and by private conference inform them, and rectify their understandings: And that is a good part of spiritual food. And to keep an ignorant person from the ordinances, is no way to improve their knowledge. Scandalous persons are likewise to be suspended; and who shall be said scandalous is to be referred to the judgment of the pastors and ruling elders: but where a commission is extant for them to execute

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this judicature will be hard to shew. Both pastors, and elders, and people, are all scandalous in the general sense. We are all of us gross sinners, and our best performances are but scandalous as to the true and sincere profession of the Gospel of Christ. Those who are scandalous sinners ought to be admonished to forsake their evil ways, and to amend their lives; and where can they receive this admonition, and hope for more conviction of their consciences, than by hearing good sermons, and being admitted to be partakers of the holy ordinances; but to excommunicate them, deprives them wholly of the best means for their cure. The best excommunication is for pastors, elders, and people to excommunicate sin out of their own hearts and conversations; to suspend themselves from all works of iniquity: this is a power, which, put in execution, through the assistance of the Spirit of God, will prevent all disputes about excommunication and suspension from the sacrament. A man may be a good physician though he never cut off a member from any of his patients, a body may be very sound though no member of it was ever cut off. And surely a church may be a good church though no member of it hath ever been cut off. I have heard here many complaints of the jurisdiction formerly exercised by the prelates who were but a few, there will be by the passing of this now desired, a great multiplication of spiritual men in government.

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Where the temporal sword (the magistracy) is sufficient for punishment of offences, there will be little need for this new discipline, nor will it be so easily granted.

FINIS.

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